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Engaging the Community in Community Engagement: Community Partners, Mutual Benefit, and Reciprocity in Community-University Partnerships

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Engaging the Community in Community Engagement: Community Partners, Mutual Benefit, and Reciprocity in Community-University Partnerships

by

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Dedication

To my family. Through thick and thin, the six of us have been the support we have always needed, and I thank each one of you for being there through this process. Onto the next!

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Engaging the Community in Community Engagement: Community Partners, Mutual Benefit, and Reciprocity in Community-University Partnerships

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Community engagement in higher education has continued to increase and adapt to the needs and changes in society. Through community-university partnerships, colleges and universities are able to engage with their communities through mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships. While research has included the experiences of higher education administrators and faculty members in this engagement, few empirical studies have addressed the experiences, perspective, and voice of community partners in community-university partnerships. As a result, this study adds to the needed empirical research on community engagement in higher education from the community side of the partnership.

Three research questions guided this study: (1) How do community agents define mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships? (2) How do community agents, who represent community partners with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin, make meaning of their experiences in a community-university partnership? And (3) How do community agents' experiences connect to their definition of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?

Through a qualitative approach using phenomenology, this study focused on the lived experiences of long-standing community partners in community-university partnerships at a four-year public research institution with an institutionalized community engagement division. Hearing the community voice in community engagement is an oft-cited need in community engagement literature.

Using a conceptual framework based on complementing theories to understand community-university partnerships, this research study underscores the experiences of community partners through findings including: creating a community in community engagement; context matters; the need for knowledge; it is all about relationships; and contextualization of terminology. The experiences of the community partners in this study reaffirm findings in the extant literature as well as add to the greater focus of the community perspective in community engagement based in the academy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Given their past historical interactions, what has driven higher educations institutions across the nation to become increasingly more engaged with their communities? More importantly, why have communities and their representatives, who for the most part have been ill treated by higher education institutions, taken the chance on working with colleges and universities in a variety of endeavors? American institutions of higher education have moved away from their historic attitudes of separating town from gown and only venturing out when the community fit the needs of a research study site.

Today, engaging with the community, be it local, state, regional, national, or even international, has become a commonplace occurrence for all types of higher education institutions. This growing attention to the university's third mission–service–after teaching and research, has spurred numerous discussions about purpose, scope, and effectiveness of such ventures. As more initiatives fall under the umbrella of community engagement, its complexity emerges (Fear, Rosaen, Bawden, & Foster-Fishman, 2006). A number of factors have affected the increase in community engagement initiatives, the most important of which has been the changing landscape of higher education, especially as society's assumptions and regard of higher education are debated as to whether it is a public or private good. According to Wiewel and Knapp (2005), given the "increased calls for accountability and 'engagement,' institutions of higher education have started to place active roles in bringing their intellectual and institutional resources to bear on their

immediate environment" (p. 5). Through community engagement, colleges and universities are able to fulfill their missions and influence the public good.

The vision of modern day community engagement is one that encompasses mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnerships between two or more entities, at least from the perspective of higher education. Community engagement, through community-university partnerships, allows higher education institutions to interact with community agents, and vice versa, for meaningful yet diverse purposes. For this study, the term 'community agents' will be used to distinguish those community partners identified as the point person of contact and/or president/leader of that organization from community partners in general. In terms of reciprocity, Jacob, Sutin, Weidman, and Yeager (2015) explain "that HEIs [higher education institutions] should be intimately established within their local communities in order to have a sustainable impact on society; likewise local communities should have a seamless network with HEIs in order to maintain an equal and positive partnership" (p. 3). Yet, how community engagement comes to be differs based on institutional type, purpose of engagement, and even the community that surrounds a particular higher education institution. As with any other relationship, community engagement through community-university partnerships includes numerous elements, foci, and goals, all of which are contingent on the partners and the scope of the relationship. This study seeks the input of the other side of the partnership–community partners. Not only is their voice heard less in the research, their involvement may be further from what mutually beneficial partnership means from the higher education side.

While more literature has focused on community engagement and its consequences for higher education institutions, most of what is written centers on the experiences of the higher education faculty or administrators engaging with community members (Fear et al., 2006; Sandy & Holland, 2006). Those studies that have concentrated on community partners' perceptions have almost exclusively been about service learning programs (Cruz & Giles, 2000). Moreover, most literature written on higher education is more rhetorically focused than empirically based (Watson, 2007). Even though community engagement has been utilized within higher education to create change, a full examination of how their effectiveness for both sides is still not well studied (Watson, 2007). At the same time, the largest push for modern-day community-university partnerships stems from the ideals of reciprocity and mutually beneficial partnerships (Boyer, 1996).

Given the complexity of community engagement endeavors and the partnerships that are either a result of or source for, understanding the processes and types of community-university partnerships that arise are an important consideration for any higher education already engaged or seeking to engage with its surrounding communities. Specifically, the perspectives, experiences, and, most importantly, the voice of community partners need to be an equitable part of the conversation about establishing and sustaining community-university partnerships and whether they meet the ideals of mutually beneficial and reciprocal. According to Jacob et al. (2015), an important cause of failed community engagement partnerships is the dearth of community support and participation: "stakeholders should be involved in every aspect of the planning,

development, implementation, and evaluation processes…It is perhaps the single most important ingredient that is too often neglected" (p. 18). In addition, Fear et al. (2006) discuss the implications of myopic interpretations of community engagement wherein a top-down approach is the only lens through which community engagement is described. Through their work as faculty, they make the following justification:

> Nothing is served by making definitive pronouncements about engagement. Instead, we need honest and authentic discourse about engagement's meaning and intent, conversations that are guided by evocative questions, such as the ones in which our discourse is grounded: What is engagement? With whom do we engage? Why do we engage? How do we engage? [And] toward what end do we engage? (Fear et al., 2006, pp. 57-58)

Community members engaged in community-university partnerships should likewise have the same opportunity to present their experiences and answers to these questions.

Therefore, this chapter begins with background and history on community engagement in higher education institutions including the role of mutually beneficial relationships within community-university partnerships. The chapter also introduces the problem statement and the subsequent purpose of the study, the research questions, methodology, and conceptual framework, as well as limitations of the study. The significance and contribution of the study and a list of key terms are also included. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of how the study is organized.

Background

American higher education has had a long history of engaging with the community, for better or worse, since the establishment of the first higher education institution, Harvard, in 1636 (Pasque, 2010). From the colonial times to the 19th century,

the mission of higher education revolved around educating citizens and future leaders of society (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Harkins, 2013). As higher education continued to expand across the country, a number of acts such as the two Morrill Acts and their establishment of land grant institutions and the GI Bill further reconsidered the connections between higher education institutions and communities (Jacob et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2004). However, the interactions between colleges and universities and their surrounding environments have historically been viewed negatively. Common terms such as "town and gown" and "ivory tower" harken back to the divide between higher education and community; "community members often cite examples of when university faculty parachuted into the community to 'study it'…only to abandon them when studies were completed" (Butterfield & Soska, 2004, p. 8). The slow progression from isolation to entering a community only when it benefited the higher education institution has left an indelible mark on interactions between the two (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

It was not until the late 20th century that how colleges and universities viewed, let alone interacted with, their communities changed (Roper & Hirth, 2005). The ideas of Bok in the 1980s about universities becoming more engaged in addressing societal issues along with teaching and researching and then Boyer in the 1990s about the scholarship of engagement reintroduced the scholarly imperative of higher education institutions collaborating with their communities (Fisher et al., 2004). Today's community engagement is a response to these calls to action as well as the shifting landscape of higher education in terms of changing demographics, declining public funding, and the

ongoing debate of public versus private good. In addition, higher education institutions are physically situated within their communities whereas other entities can relocate to a more prosperous area; colleges and universities are place bound (Fisher et al., 2004). As a result, this shift in how higher education institutions have interacted with their communities has been immense; according to Fear et al. (2006), "what had been viewed by higher education as service *to*, then extension *of,* and still later outreach *from*, is now considered engagement *with*" (p. 1, italics in original).

However, that is not to say that once higher education institutions began to engage with their communities in a reciprocal way those issues of knowledge creation, power imbalances, and lack of reciprocity were remedied. According to Fear et al. (2006):

> While traditional and conventional connections between higher education and society have resulted in immense benefits to human well-being, it also has notable limitations. Its application creates an asymmetric relationship between academics as "expert specialists" and citizens as "passive recipients of expert knowledge. (p. 80)

The interplay between knowledge and power has created important considerations that need to be addressed in understanding community-university partnerships. The power imbalance can further create a chilling effect for community partners as they engage with higher education institutions and their faculty, administrators, and students (Fisher et al., 2004).

Thus, the most recent approach to engagement is through partnerships that embrace the ideas of mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships (Shannon & Wang, 2010). As Fisher et al. (2004) explain, in order to address past actions and current power imbalances, higher education institutions must consider how to create relationships that

are more equitable. The incentives to do so are not only in the community's benefit but for the higher education institutions as well: "only when [higher education institutions] recognize and value…mutual benefit can a more reciprocal relationship of fuller partnership be built" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 31).

Community-university partners are multifaceted and diverse in their purpose and scope, which is why mutual benefit and reciprocity are important. How they come about and to what extent often depends on the partners themselves–either the higher education institution or the community stakeholder (Baum, 2000; Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011; McNall, Reed, Brown, & Allen, 2009; Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis, 2005). Researchers have cited certain elements that have led to the success and sustainability of community- university partnerships; these include: set goals, action plans, flexibility, diversity of thought, collaboration, organizational readiness, and ethical modes of engagement (Baum, 2000; Curwood et al., 2011; Dempsey, 2009; Sadler et al., 2012). Other factors affect community-university partnerships that stem from the different stages of the partnerships as well as factors internal and external to the higher education institutions and to the community partner (Holland & Gelmon, 1998; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

The assessment of community-university partnerships has become a more recognized need in community engagement as various associations, such as the Carnegie Foundation and Campus Compact, provide frameworks and guides that help colleges and universities ascertain the extent of their community engagement. However, how community engagement and the community-university partnerships that result from the

engagement are assessed is not as structured as it needs to be (Hart & Northmore, 2011). In addition, as more colleges and universities institutionalize community engagement, the resulting accountability necessitates assessment. Since community-university partnerships are relationships between the two entities, the assessment should also include the community perspective; this, nevertheless, is lacking throughout most, if not all, audit and benchmarking systems in higher education (Hart & Northmore, 2011).

While community-university partnerships have certain elements that are necessary for success, as stated above, in order for a community-university partnership to reflect mutual benefit, there are other factors involved. The co-creation of knowledge in a mutually beneficial relationship needs to acknowledge the strengths of both partners: the academic knowledge of the university and the insights and experiences of the community (Shannon & Wang, 2010). It is critical for the community partner to have an equitable role in the partnership; if not, an imbalance in power, in goals, and fairness results (Dempsey, 2009). Through an analysis of interpersonal relationships, Bringle and Hatcher (2002) pointed to fairness, equity, and integrity as necessary elements for mutually beneficial relationships. They also found that from the higher education side essentials included: a structured mission, a centralized approach to engagement with learned administrators, and compatibility and communication with the partners (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). In order to address the past historical faults and power imbalances present between higher education institutions and community stakeholders, a culture shift needs to occur from within the institution itself (Curwood et al., 2011; Northmore & Hart, 2011).

Problem Statement

Most of the community engagement literature examines community-university partnerships from the higher education side through the perspectives of institutions, faculty, and administrators (Adams, 2014; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, 2010). As a result, the largest gap in the extant literature on community engagement is the lack of research done on the community partner's perspectives and experiences. How can researchers justify and describe community-university partnerships as mutually beneficial and reciprocal without the input of the community partners? A number of scholars point to the importance and need for the community perspective in ascertaining the effectiveness of community-university partnerships (see for example, Sandmann, 2008; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Even the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement underscores the importance of having the community voice heard within the application and within the actions of the institutions who receive the classification; one such question posits: "does the community have a 'voice' or role for input into institutional or department planning for community engagement" (Carnegie Foundation, 2015, p. 8).

Those few studies that aimed to understand community partners' perspectives reiterated the common themes that researchers have cited for successful partnerships. Creighton (2006) conducted an action research study with community partners to develop indicators of engagement from the community perspective. While Creighton's dissertation provides a much needed analysis of community perspective, it follows the trend found in community engagement literature where a listing of elements or factors are

presented for the better understanding of community-university partnerships. As a result, there is a need for recognizing more than just best practices in creating or sustaining community-university partnerships; understanding the lived experiences of community stakeholders involved in community-university partners will provide a substantial examination of community engagement (Sandmann, 2008). Moreover, literature written on higher education community engagement is primarily rhetorical (Watson, 2007); as a growing area in higher education, the need for empirical studies on community engagement and community-university partnerships is justified.

Community-university partnerships at their core are relationships between two or more representatives from the higher education institution and the community partner. Colleges and universities engage with community partners for complex reasons, none of which is for purely altruistic reasons. Thus, understanding the community partners as the people who represent them and not only as the organization and/or entity will allow for a better interaction within the partnerships that can lead to an examination of mutually beneficial and reciprocal engagement means to the community side. Overall, a research study that focuses on the experiences of community partners can not only help balance out the literature on community engagement but also address the ideals of mutual benefit and reciprocity by highlighting the role and experiences of community partners within community-university partnerships. By doing so, this research could be helpful to higher education institutions participating in community engagement as well as community organizations and/or members working with colleges and universities.

Purpose of Study

Even though great strides have been taken to create a two-way approach to engagement, this reciprocity should also be evident in the literature and research done on community engagement. According to Sandmann (2008), "a stronger representation of community partners' perspectives would ["make for a more robust exploration of the scholarship of engagement"], and would be consistent with the norms and values of engagement" (p. 100). That is why this study moved beyond just hearing the community voice to focus on the experiences, understanding, and participation of community partners. Hence, the purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the lived experiences of community agents who are part of a community-university partnership at The University of Texas at Austin through its Division of Diversity and Community. The University of Texas at Austin, a large public research university, upholds the ideals of community engagement through its institutional mission and creation and sustainability of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (see Chapter 3 for further justification for studying UT Austin). In addition, the study delved into what mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships are and how they can be achieved by highlighting the lived experiences of community partners. Given the scope of community engagement and the equitable involvement of community partners in the creation of such initiatives, 'engaging the community in community engagement' as it were allows for a better understanding of mutual benefit and reciprocity within community-university partnerships.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do community agents define mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?
2. How do community agents, who represent community partners with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin, make meaning of their experiences in a community-university partnership?
3. How do community agents' experiences connect to their definition of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology was informed by the research questions pertaining to community agents in community-university partnerships and their experiences as being part of such an enterprise in community engagement. Since the focus was on how these community agents make meaning of their experiences, a qualitative research study fit well. According to Creswell (2013), "the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature" (p. 47). As stated above, most of what has been written about community engagement comes from the higher education side of the partnership; thus, through a qualitative study that focused solely on the community side, their voice and experiences were be better heard and situated within the research on community engagement. The study also included a small quantitative element using a questionnaire that was sent to all community partners in the selected

research site. Consequently, while this study utilized a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of the community agents, it also provided a larger picture, through the questionnaire, including qualitative and qualitative data about the larger group of community partners within the DDCE.

Through semi-structured, in depth interviews and follow-up emails with the 15 community agents who participated in the study, the researcher was able to ascertain the necessary elements for a phenomenological study. Hays and Singh (2012) explain that "the purpose of phenomenology is to discover and describe the meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences, or knowledge as it appears to consciousness" (p. 50). The study relied on Creswell's (2013) abridged version of Moustakas' (1994) approach to phenomenology, known as transcendental phenomenology, as the experiences of the participants were at the forefront and the researcher's experiences and positionality were bracketed out of the study. This ensured that the overall goal of focusing on the community side would be underscored throughout the study given the researcher's positionality within the higher education side.

Site and participant selection are important considerations within any phenomenological study since an important element of a phenomenology is to interview participants who have "direct, immediate experience with" the phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 50). As a result, the study used two types of sampling approaches. First, the study implemented a nested sampling approach, wherein participants from the questionnaire were recruited to participate in the phenomenological interviews (Mertens, 2010). To choose potential participants for the interviews, purposeful sampling provided

a range of community partners who met the selected criteria. Three basic criteria were used for all participants: being the point person–the community agent–of the partnership; having sustained a partnership for longer than a year with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement as an individual but represent a partnership that is longer than two years; and representing an organization that is based in Austin, Texas. Maximum variation within the sample was also used based on the responses to questions about mutually benefit and reciprocity within the community agents' partnership with DDCE (see Chapter 4 for more descriptions). The research questions built upon how the community agents defined mutual benefit and reciprocity, saw the elements in their partnership, and interpreted the definitions within their experiences. As a result, maximum variation allowed for a fuller representation of the experiences of the community agents when it came to their perspectives and experiences with mutual benefit and reciprocity

The study made a strong justification for choosing The University of Texas at Austin and its Division of Diversity and Community Engagement as the site selection for the research study. The past and current actions of the university, the impetus for the creation of the division, and the role the university has and continues to play in higher education law cases provide a compelling reason to study community-university partnerships at this site. Given the historical, social, and racial issues that surround the university, understanding the lived experiences of community partners within this context allowed for a better understanding of what they experience and how they experience it–the hallmarks of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

To provide a more holistic view of community agents' experiences, the study used numerous types of data collection methods. The questionnaire canvased all community partners at the division. From the questionnaire, the phenomenological interviews were conducted with those community agents who fit the above mentioned criteria. A modified version of Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interview approach was implemented. Seidman's approach allowed for the essence of the phenomenon—in this study, the community-university partnership—to be discovered through the interviewing process. Document analysis also complemented the data from the questionnaire and the interviews. Documents related to the partnerships or the partners were searched for as well as requested from each community agent interviewed. A heavier reliance was on the documentation given by the community agent rather than what was found by the researcher since that could have distorted understanding the lived experiences of the participants. The researcher wrote descriptive field notes after each interview to summarize any verbal or non-verbal queues present during the interviews that the audio recording might not have revealed. Finally, reciprocity played a major role in how the data was collected; sharing transcripts and documentation with the participants to garner feedback and potential clarifications helped keep the community agents' voices apparent throughout the research study.

The crux of the study, the data analysis, included elements that complemented the researchers' epistemological stance of pragmatism, the study's qualitative method, and the role of validity within a research study. From pragmatism, the elements of intersubjectivity and transferability were utilized in the data analysis. Moustakas' (1994)

structured approach to analyzing a phenomenological study ensured that the significant statements from the participants' data led to themes, textural and structural descriptions, and, finally, to the essence of the phenomenon. Two types of coding methods were used in analyzing written texts and transcriptions from the participants: open coding and axial coding. Corbin and Strauss (2008) posit that even though the two are distinguished from one another, the coding should happen simultaneously. The quantitative data that was gathered from the questionnaire provided descriptive statistics of a substantial group of community partners from the division, regardless of their meeting the criteria for the qualitative portion of the study. Finally, Creswell (2008) identifies a number of validation strategies for qualitative studies and evaluation questions for phenomenological studies. His recommendations helped ensure that the study is "well grounded and well supported" (Creswell, 2013, p. 258) given the lack of empirical research on community engagement and the connection of the researcher with the study's site.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study used a conceptual framework that was developed from complementing theories used to understand community-university partnerships. The theories are: boundary spanning, place building, knowledge flow and transfer theories, and relationship metaphor from organizational theory.

Boundary spanning focuses on building bridges between higher education and the community (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). For place building theory, Kimball and Thomas (2012) rationalize that "all community engagement…represents a kind of place-

building practice whose outcomes…embody a set of intrinsic beliefs and values motivating engagement strategies" (p. 19). Havelock's (1969) theory of knowledge flow also expresses the relationships between organizations and external constituents and how that relationship protects or disseminates knowledge (as cited in Weerts, 2005). In addition, knowledge transfer theory posits "that new knowledge is generated by a collective process, and that the universities cannot generate such knowledge alone" (Schuetze, 2010, p. 22). The metaphor of relationship building from organizational theory is another area that will help accentuate the personal aspect to community-university partnerships. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) believe that by recognizing "the phases and dynamics of relationships, a better understanding of institutional and personal action steps that might be taken to initiate, develop, maintain, and nurture a healthy partnership with the community" emerges (p. 505).

Each theory provides elements that are found in the literature describing community-university partnerships. From boundary spanning, the connections between the institution and community partners, relationship and knowledge building, and bridging, or bringing together of people from diverse areas and backgrounds, are all relevant components. Similarly, place building expands beyond the physical place building and towards relationship building, which results in the co-creation of ideas and knowledge. Place building allows for the values and perspectives of universities and communities to be acknowledged. Since community-university partnerships often originate for the purposes of addressing common goals or concerns, the creation and transfer of knowledge become a direct and indirect outcome of the partnerships.

Sometimes knowledge flow and transfer may have a unidirectional approach; therefore, it is imperative to understand knowledge building in the context of relationship and place building within community engagement. Without that, a one-way transfer of knowledge from university to community negates the goal of creating mutually beneficial partnerships. Finally, organizational theory's use of a relationship metaphor adds the intrinsic values found in interpersonal relationships to the overall understanding of community-university partnerships. As with any relationship, partnerships between a university and community have different phases and dynamics that can change because of a number of factors, including the different perspectives that the partners have. As a result, the conceptual framework highlights the four common elements of: relationship building, knowledge building, different perspectives, and values.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

As with any qualitative study, limitations emerged in terms of scope and generalizability. First, the study only looked at community agents within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) at The University of Texas at Austin. While many four-year higher education institutions have entities like the DDCE, the experiences of the DDCE community agents might not translate to those at different institutions based on type, geography, and institutional mission. Generalizability is a wanted quality within quantitative research; however, the findings from this qualitative study could provide some transferability but does not claim to provide a full picture of the experiences of all community partners engaged in community-university partnerships. In addition, since the community partners had the option of selecting to be interviewed,

the experiences of community partners not participating in the study could be different from the experiences of those who do participate. Moreover, since the extant literature on community engagement focuses on best practices and trends within community-university partnerships, this study was limited in the type of conceptual framework that could be appropriately used. By combining elements from different theories, the proposed conceptual framework might have created limitations in how the perspective of community-university partnerships was shaped by the researcher.

The study was delimited in a number of ways in order to provide a context for understanding the experiences of community partners at a large, public research university with strong connections to its surrounding communities. Community agents who have been engaged with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement for longer than a year and represent a partnership that has been existence for longer than two years reflect the sustainability needed in community-university partnerships. Concentrating on the experiences of community partners also delimited the research study in order to provide an empirical study on community partners in relation to community-university partners; this is not done enough in community engagement literature. In addition, the study was delimited to provide the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement with a greater understanding of the experiences of their community partners. As a result, focusing on The University of Texas at Austin and its Division of Diversity and Community Engagement was purposefully done so that the findings can inform future endeavors and my own work in the Division on community engagement policies. However, it should be noted that this research study did not

propose to assess or evaluate the Division or its practices in community engagement; rather, the hope was that this research could inform the division and community members of future community engagement endeavors.

Significance and Contribution of Study

Most community engagement research has focused on the perspectives and experiences of higher education institutions. However, understanding community perspective allows higher education partners to better comprehend the outcomes of engagement and the community partners' evaluation of it (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Even though this research had an external focus into higher education community engagement, it can benefit both internal and external constituents of higher education and specifically those that already engage with the community or those who wish to begin to do so. As classifications such as Carnegie continue to emphasize the importance of institutionalized community engagement, having a well-rounded understanding of all the participants' perspectives could be insightful. This research could be a vehicle of empowerment for community partners and how they can work with universities to make sure their voices are heard and their goals and contributions are maximized.

Definitions of Key Terms

- *Boundary spanning*: According to Aldrich and Herker (1976), the function of boundary spanning is to allow information from outside an organization to come in and to allow for external representation to occur. This occurs through a bridging

between the external, the community, and the organization, the university, at the individual and organizational levels (Weerts & Sandmannn, 2010).

- *Civic engagement*: While often used synonymously with community engagement, for the purpose of this study, civic engagement will be considered within the larger scope of community engagement. Service learning is commonly attributed to civic engagement; "civic engagement is…a pedagogical practice that involves direct or indirect action taken to address public issues, which results in promoting and improving the quality of life for individuals and the community" (Delano-Oriaran, Penick-Parks, & Fondrie, 2015, Introduction section, para. 3).
- *Community*: A nebulous term used in community engagement to refer to numerous stakeholders who can arise from the local, state, national, or even global level. Defining community often comes from the specific groups involved in community engagement (Bednarz et al., 2008). Zlotkowski (1999) defines community as that which "primarily consists of (1) off-campus populations underserved by our market economy and (2) organizations whose primary purpose is the common good" (p. 82).
- *Community agent*: For this study, community agent represents the point person of contact and/or president/leader of the organization, business, or entity that is actively engaged in a community-university partnership. Distinguishing an individual from the organization she might represent will allow this research study to focus on individuals from the community side involved in community-university partnerships.
- *Community engagement*: Engagement with the community has come a long way in higher education. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and

Learning's definition of community engagement is often quoted by scholars and practitioners alike. The Carnegie Foundation (n.d.b) defines community engagement as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good" (How is Community Engagement Defined section, para.1-2).

- *Community partner*: Unlike a community agent who represents an individual in this study, a community partner is the entity engaged in the partnership, be it a non-profit organization, community group, governmental group, or other organization. Community partners can also be "neighborhoods, community agencies, schools, and corporate entities" (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 3).
- *Community-university partnership*: According to Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2005), community-university partnerships are "an explicit written or verbal agreement between a community setting… and an academic unit to engage in a common project or common goal, which is mutually beneficial for an extended period" (p. 85). At their core, community-university partnerships are a convergence of interests with a goal of creating public good by both parties (Baum, 2000).

- *Engaged scholarship*: Introduced by Boyer (1996) to encourage higher education institutions to better connect their resources and expertise to the needs of the community, engaged scholarship, or scholarship of engagement, is the basis for modern day community engagement in higher education. He elaborated on the definition of engaged scholarship to "creating a special climate in which the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other, helping to enlarge…the universe of human discourse and enriching the quality of life for all of us" (Boyer, 1996, p. 33).
- *Higher education institutions*: For this study, higher education institutions engaged in community-university partnerships will consist of four-year, non-profit, public and private institutions.
- *Knowledge flow theory*: Havelock's (1969) theory of knowledge flow expresses the relationships between organizations and external constituents and how that relationship protects or disseminates knowledge (as cited in Weerts, 2005). There are different values that affect the transfer of knowledge, which the theory acknowledges and manages; they include elements of pride, status differences, reward, and crisis (Weerts, 2005).
- *Knowledge transfer*: Also known as knowledge dissemination, "its most common definition is the transfer of knowledge within and across settings, with the expectation that the knowledge will be 'used' conceptually (as learning, enlightenment, or the acquisition of new perspectives or attitudes) or instrumentally (in the form of modified or new practices). There are, however, those who see dissemination as

having other legitimate outcomes. Some of these outcomes include: (1) increased awareness; (2) ability to make informed choices among alternatives; and (3) the exchange of information, materials or perspectives" (Hutchinson & Huberman, 1994, p. 28).

- *Mutual benefit*: According to Janke (2013), "the term speaks to the outcomes anticipated and expected by all parties involved in the activity, initiative, or relationship. In community-university engagement, mutual benefit includes academic outcomes (e.g., student development, scholarly advancement, institutional priorities) and community outcomes (e.g., serving the community organization's mission and priorities). All stakeholders are expected to achieve meaningful outcomes. Mutual benefit does not imply equal benefit…rather, mutual benefit suggests equity–that partners achieve the outcomes that are just and meaningful to them" (p. 4).
- *Place building theory*: Place building theory looks beyond the physical place that community engagement occurs in and towards the connections that can be made between a university and community. Kimball and Thomas (2012) explain that "place-building theory…explains to what degree an organization values and invests in its geographical and social location.…Community engagement…represents a kind of place-building practice whose outcomes–economic and social relations, ethical conduct, construction and treatment of built and natural environments–embody a set of intrinsic beliefs and values motivating engagement strategies" (p. 19).

- *Reciprocity*: "reciprocity is the recognition, respect, and valuing of the knowledge, perspective and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration" (Carnegie Foundation, 2011, Reciprocity section, para. 1).
- *Relationships*: In organizational theory, the use of metaphors is common. One such metaphor is that of interpersonal relationships. This research study will rely on this analogy in connecting the partnership between a university and a community entity to understand the dynamics and changes that occur throughout the history of the partnership. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) posit that by recognizing "the phases and dynamics of relationships, a better understanding of institutional and personal action steps that might be taken to initiate, develop, maintain, and nurture a healthy partnership with the community" emerges (p. 505).

Organization of Study

This dissertation study encompassed a number of chapters to provide the breadth and scope necessary for a substantial study on community agents in community-university partners. The first chapter introduced the role of community engagement in higher education while also highlighting the purpose and definition of community-university partnerships and mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships. It also provided the problem statement, purpose, and contribution of the study in addition to definitions of key terms used throughout the study. The second chapter will offer a comprehensive review of relevant literature; it will focus on the historical trends in community engagement, the various stakeholders, the elements and assessment of

community-university partnerships, the definition of mutually beneficial partnerships, community partners' perspectives, and a conceptual framework that includes various theories that complement the role and goals of mutually beneficial partnerships. The third chapter will cover the methodology to be used in the study. It will describe the research design, site and participation selection, data collection and instruments, and data analysis. The fourth chapter provides descriptive statistics from the questionnaire and participant profiles of the 15 individuals interviewed in this study. Chapter 5, through a phenomenological approach, will introduce the textural and structural descriptors of each research question as well as the composite themes that all build into the core essence of the study. Finally, chapter six will detail the findings of the study through the conceptual framework and concludes with implications, limitations, and future research possibilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The study sought to explore the experiences of community stakeholders involved in community-university partnerships with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. The purpose of this chapter is to present the existing literature on community engagement, specifically about community-university partnerships. The various sections in the chapter introduce community engagement; present relevant stakeholders within community engagement; define community-university partnerships; describe the role and purpose of mutually beneficial partnerships; explain the community partners' role and voice within a higher education context; and finally, review pertinent theoretical frameworks to help structure the study on community-university partnerships.

Community Engagement

Community engagement in higher education is a growing field of connection to and with the community surrounding a given institution. Colleges and universities have increased their involvement in communities because of past historical actions, institutional mission, and stakeholder expectations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). With the increase, national agencies began to assess and validate community engagement efforts. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is one such example. The Carnegie Foundation (n.d.a) defines community engagement broadly as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities…for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Classification Definition section, para. 1). Bednarz, et al. (2008) explain

that "community engagement…refer[s] to any ethical, reciprocal, and interactive relationship of shared learning fostered between the…[institution] and the external community or communities, however defined" (p. 89). The Foundation has an elective community engagement classification wherein institutions of higher education can apply through a cycle system to underscore the community engagement efforts that they are implementing throughout their institution (New England Resource Center for Higher Education, n.d.). In addition, some scholars use civic engagement as a synonym for community engagement (O'Connor, 2006). For the purposes of this study, community engagement will be the overarching description. Martin, Smith, and Phillips (2005) delineate community engagement categories as service learning, service provisions, faculty involvement, student volunteerism, "community in classrooms," and applied research (pp. 5-7). Other forms of engagement include economic development, community-based research, and social work initiatives (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004).

There are four purposes to community engagement. Although they are their own entities, they often overlap and complement each other. According to Hoy and Johnson (2013), complementing and increasing students' academic learning, assisting faculty with their pedagogies, connecting the university with its communities, and positively affecting community groups are the essential parts of community engagement in higher education.

HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is not a new process in higher education. It has changed dramatically since the inception of higher education in the United States, but higher

education institutions have always purported that their mission is to educate citizens and serve their society in some capacity (Fisher et al., 2004). Society, in turn, has affected how higher education institutions have operated throughout the years; universities have consistently adapted because of societal changes (Benneworth, 2013). However, engagement with the community only occurred when it aided the institution, not the community. As Martin et al. (2005) describe, when community issues began to intrude on American universities, they created literal barriers in the form of walls and gates to isolate the community from the institution. The relationship progressed to include encounters in which an institution would utilize the community for its own benefit, such as for research opportunities or university needs (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Thus, "partnerships between universities and community organizations have been either non-existent or unconstructive; this state of affairs being the result of opposing philosophies and practices" between the goals of higher education and the needs of the communities (Martin et al., 2005, p. 2). Traditionally, higher education had a unidirectional relationship in interacting with communities (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). This happened through outreach in the form of non-credit courses and consultations by faculty members (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). When the economy of the United States changed from agricultural to industrial, outreach changed as well. The application of knowledge and working to improve economic and governmental sectors became important, however outreach continued to be delivered to the community without efforts of creating engagement (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Accordingly, community and university

associations continued to suffer from the one-sided efforts of institutions and the wariness of communities towards higher education.

However, in the late 20th century, a transformation occurred in how colleges and universities began to relate to their communities. A shift from a unidirectional approach to a two-way approach highlighted the connections between higher education and community (Roper & Hirth, 2005). This came in part because of changing societal needs and in part for higher education's stability and sustainability (Roper & Hirth, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). In the 1980s, Bok posited the role of universities working towards addressing societal issues (Fisher et al., 2004). The largest push for change in campus community relationship was Boyer's concept on the scholarship of engagement. Boyer (1996) emphasized the necessity for better connections between what institutions of higher education could provide to their communities and what community needs were. Through that recommendation, the term scholarship of engagement emerged and became an important reference in today's community engagement literature (see, for example, Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Butin, 2010; Cutforth Fretz, Nicotera, & Thompson 2011).

Community engagement in universities today is much different than it was at the inception of American higher education. It also varies by type and mission of institutions (Jacob, Sutin, Weidman, Yeager, 2015). As Holland (1997) elaborates, "engagement…is playing out differently across institutions, and the level of involvement in and commitment to service takes many different forms" (p. 30). In addition, while being an engaged university is viewed positively, the reality of being actually engaged is not simple because of the business model emphasis in higher education today (Benneworth,

2013). Even with the difficulties for institutions to become engaged, the endeavors are seen as worthy undertakings for higher education (Benneworth, 2013). Thus, even though the role of community engagement is increasing in higher education, the ensuing complexity merits further consideration into undertakings labeled as community engagement.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT TODAY

While community engagement practices are increasing in higher education, many colleges and universities have a history of ill treatment towards their surrounding communities. Especially in the United States, higher education institutions have been part of the system that reinforced segregation as well as promoted gentrification (Sullivan et al., 2001 as cited in Dempsey, 2010). As universities continue to progress with their community engagement efforts, understanding the historical, political, and even economic effects on their communities need to be recognized in order to create successful partnerships (Dempsey, 2010). This is necessary because higher education institutions are place bound; thus, even though the communities around them might change in terms of makeup and goals, the institutions are still physically situated in that area (Fisher et al., 2004).

According to Fisher et al. (2004), higher education institutions have always been responsive to the changes around them, for the benefit or detriment of their communities. This adaptability has meant that "at various historical moments the university has been heavily influenced by new challenges which changed its mission, role in society, understanding of students, and relations with adjacent and broader communities" (Fisher

et al., 2004, p. 16). Even though the context of engagement has changed, past interactions with community have created tensions that continue until this day (Fisher et al., 2004). Consequently, higher education institutions have created mistrust for community members often because of issues of land claims and one-directional use of service for research purposes (Fisher et al., 2004). Price, Kready, Mogul, Cohen-Filipic, and Davey (2012) state that acknowledging institutional racism and past historical practices is essential in working towards building trust for any collaboration.

Even today, engagement entails a power imbalance between institutions of higher education and communities. The creation and dissemination of knowledge highlights the imbalance. It is imperative that institutions of higher education respect and create open lines of communication with community members. In this way, community input can become comparable to a university's contribution towards engagement (Fisher et al., 2004).

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

Since the 1990s, the idea of engaged scholarship has become a necessity for colleges and universities. Boyer (1996) argued that engaged scholarship allows higher education institutions to connect their resources and expertise so that "the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other, helping to enlarge…the universe of human discourse and enriching the quality of life for all of us" (p. 33). By focusing on changing the purpose and scope of higher education, colleges and universities would be instrumental in addressing the social and economic

issues of American society (Boyer, 1996). According to Cutforth et al. (2011), the scholarship of engagement highlights:

> The mutually beneficial relationships between higher education and community partners, the reciprocal connections between theory and practice, the importance of involving students in community-based research, and making scholarly activities [as] relevant and useful for communities, as well as the academy. (p. 37)

Engaged scholarship has stressed the importance and implications of college and community relationships; as a result, a trend of joint engagement has emerged (Roper & Hirth, 2005).

Given its effect on community engagement, engaged scholarship has led to a renewed focus and more strategic endeavors in promoting community engagement across campuses nationwide in the 21st century (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). It has expanded the idea that knowledge creation can occur outside of higher education and be co-created with the community (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012). Therefore, engaged scholarship focuses on solving societal issues through a multidisciplinary approach that needs direct community involvement (Fitzgerald et al., 2012).

The Kellogg Commission (2000) describes the three elements that constitute an engaged institution. First, an institution must be structured to serve students today and in the future. Second, an institution should create experiences and opportunities for students that incorporate research and engagement into teaching. Third, an institution must use its capabilities in research and expertise to address the issues facing its surrounding communities (Kellogg Commission, 2000). The Commission created a seven-part test of engagement that checks for responsiveness towards communities, respect for partners

through collaboration, academic neutrality during public policy issues, community accessibility to the campus and its resources, integration of service in teaching and research, coordination across the campus, and resources for partnerships.

At the same time, the idea of engaged scholarship has not ameliorated all past issues within community engagement in higher education. Indeed, there are points that higher education institutions have yet to address to establish true collaboration (Anderson, 2014). The Kellogg Commission (2000) defines engagement by higher education institutions restructuring their missions "to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities" (p. 13). Yet, Anderson (2014) explains there is a separation that arises between the goals of higher education and the needs of the community served. This can include problems of perceptions and expectations from both sides: misalignment between the mission of the institution and the community's interest and perceptions of institutional wealth are such examples (Cox & Seifer, 2005). Since institutions often initiate partnerships, they are inclined to push their interests forward, which may differ from community interests.

THIRD MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Community engagement is considered the third mission of higher education, since it contributes to the service mission of a university. This connection strengthens the role of community engagement in the three major missions of the university: teaching, research, and service (Roper & Hirth, 2005; Schuetze, 2010). Benson and Harkavy (2000) explain that the emergence of the third mission came about with the realization that higher education "could, indeed must, function simultaneously as universal and as

local institutions of higher education…not only *in* but *of* their local communities" (p. 48, italics in original). However, Jongbloed, Enders, and Salerno (2008) posit that the third mission is not exclusive to teaching and research in higher education; rather, the three missions of teaching, research, and service create overlap in the goals and visions of higher education institutions.

As the ideals of service in higher education began to change from one-directional approaches to today's engaged scholarship, a number of shifts occurred in the concept of the third mission of higher education (Roper & Hirth, 2005). The two Morrill Acts and their establishment of land grant institutions and the GI Bill reassessed the connections between higher education institutions and community through the third mission (Jacob et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2004). In the 1980s, it was a way for universities to participate in economic development, to be seen as a public good, and to address increased accountability demands (Roper & Hirth, 2005). The rise of globalization and changes in technology in the 1990s as well as the calls for more diversity efforts coincided with the concept of engaged scholarship. At the same time, the debate about whether higher education was a public or private good began to take hold in American society.

The 1999 Kellogg Commission report on engaged institutions furthered the understanding of higher education's third mission. According to Roper and Hirth (2005), the report highlighted "two-way interactions of mutual benefit, signaling a change from the university-as-ivory-tower or faculty-as-expert models" (p. 13). Even though there have been different variations of the third mission, they all have a common thread of institutions trying to serve the communities around them while remaining financially

adept (Roper & Hirth, 2005). Today's continued calls for accountability within higher education institutions has led to community engagement becoming a conduit of connecting resources with community needs (Wiewel & Knapp, 2005). By addressing the third mission through community engagement activities, higher education institutions can realize their overall missions (Benneworth, 2013).

INSTITUTIONALIZED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

According to Thompson (2002), institutionalizing community engagement pushes it from the peripheries of the academy to inclusion into the mission and vision of a university. As a result, there are various methods to proceed with institutionalizing community engagement. Establishing units on campus or having dedicated administrators is one approach, while other institutions only set polices in place for engagement (Thompson, 2002). Integrating service learning into undergraduate and graduate courses, providing funding for community engagement endeavors and applying community engagement in tenure and promotion decisions are further processes of institutionalization (Thompson, 2002). Overall, institutionalized community engagement takes time and energy by a university; "for the university, commitment to collaboration often means making some substantial changes in how it conducts business both on and off campus" (Ross, 2002, p. 16). Therefore, various researchers have studied the methods and elements of establishing community engagement within higher education institutions.

An assessment tool created by Furco, Weerts, Burton, and Kent (2009) evaluates the institutionalizing process of community engagement in higher education. While the

tool assists colleges and universities in understanding the levels of engagement existing on their campus, it is also helpful in recognizing the components necessary for institutionalization (Furco & Miller, 2009). Lall (2010) highlights the importance of this process: "institutionalizing…community engagement…is one way to address the fragmentation of common efforts by social actors and stakeholders aiming to achieve societal outcomes" (p. 88). The tool includes five dimensions indicative of institutionalization: the definition of community engagement at the institution; the level of faculty involvement in community engagement; student awareness of community engagement opportunities; level and role of community partnerships in the institution's engagement; and the institutional support for such initiatives (Furco et al., 2009). These dimensions correspond to the features that affect the success and sustainability of community engagement on campuses. As Bringle and Hatcher (2000) anticipate, only "when transformation of the work of colleges and universities on the scholarship of engagement occurs that is integral, enduring, and meaningful to all stakeholders, then…community engagement…will be institutionalized" (p. 274).

Weerts and Sandmann's (2008) study on six institutions noted that primarily academic professionals worked in community engagement with faculty members serving as experts or researchers. Given that tenure and promotion criteria are barriers to engagement by faculty members, the connection between academic staff and faculty members becomes understandable (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). The researchers recommend that a centralized approach to community engagement leads to the creation of a hub to disseminate knowledge and resources that will benefit community-university

partnerships (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). According to Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, and Connors (1998), a "university must clearly indicate that it is willing to learn about the community, thus building stronger relationships and becoming better able to respond to community-identified issues" (p. 104). Within the institution, changes and adaptability are necessary in order for community engagement to be a sustainable endeavor.

One element of institutionalizing community engagement is through the institution's mission statement. Including community engagement in the vision and mission of a university allows organizational change to occur, which promotes engagement by different constituents, on and off campus (Cutforth et al., 2011). However, including the words is not enough. According to Butin (2010), "it is necessary to construct a conscious, careful, and critical academic examination of the process and product of a scholarship of engagement" (p. 141). Having a mission that promotes community engagement and structural openness is important for successful implementations of such initiatives (Holland, 1997).

Welch (2016) indicates that institutionalizing community engagement in higher education is no easy feat and one that needs to take the considerations of the various stakeholders involved:

> Institutionalizing community engagement is even more complex as it involves factors found in community organizations that may or may not easily mesh with the structures in colleges and universities. The process requires trust building and open communication, both of which are traditionally missing in town-gown interactions. (p. 88)

Stakeholders in Community Engagement

Community engagement includes numerous stakeholders who represent either the higher education or the community side. The community can be at the local, state, national, or global level. However, defining community often comes from the specific groups involved in community engagement (Bednarz et al., 2008). There are also other stakeholders, in the form of agencies, which shape the implementation of community engagement in higher education (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

PRIMARY CONSTITUENTS

One way of examining stakeholders is through the SOFAR framework (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009). The acronym stands for "Students, Organizations in the community, Faculty, Administrators on the campus, Residents in the community (or in some instances, clients, consumers or special interest populations)" (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 5). Through this framework, the researchers identify the connections between these stakeholders and potential partnerships for engagement. Figure 1.1 depicts the framework and the connections that the constituents have with one another. The figure includes numbered arrows to represent the ten connections that are perceived through the SOFAR framework between the five constituent groups. While students are an important part of community engagement initiatives, for the purposes of this study, the emphasis is on the connections between faculty and administrators with community organizations and residents.

From the campus view, community engagement is either centralized or decentralized. Many institutions employ centers or divisions that focus on community engagement on campus

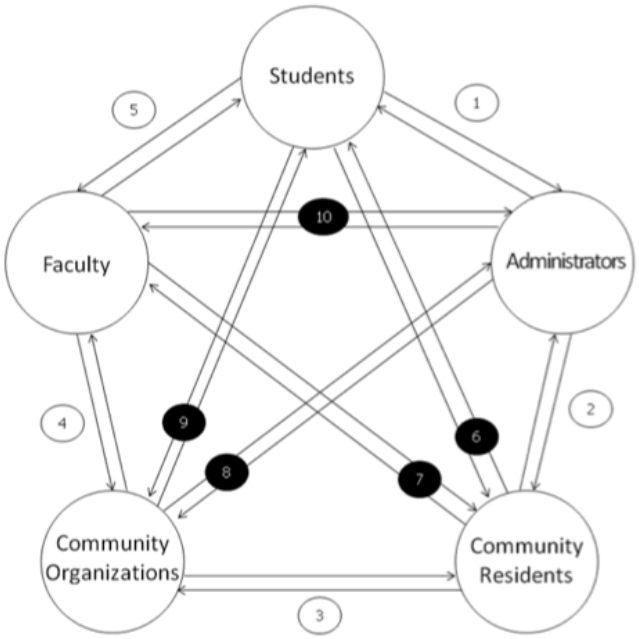

Figure 1.1: The SOFAR Framework of community engagement with connections. Reprinted from Partnerships in service learning and civic engagement, by R. G., Bringle, P. H. Clayton, & M. Price, 2009, Partnerships: A Journal of Service Learning & Civic Engagement, 1(1), p. 5. Copyright 2009 Partnerships: A Journal of Service Learning & Civic Engagement.

(Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Community engagement is likewise present in classrooms, in colleges, among student organizations, and in faculty research (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009). Schuetze (2010) elaborates that "often it is not the institution as a whole but subunits like schools or facilities, institutes, centers, and programs, and individuals…that interact with

and serve the community in various ways" (p. 13). These units are part of the institutionalization of community engagement at colleges and universities.

As community engagement emerges from various sectors in a university, the community itself is also varied. Zlotkowski (1999) defines community as that which "primarily consists of (1) off-campus populations underserved by our market economy and (2) organizations whose primary purpose is the common good" (p. 82). Community partners can further include "neighborhoods, community agencies, schools, and corporate entities" (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 3). However, Dempsey (2010) points to the ambiguous concept of community and its negative effects on community engagement in higher education. The interpretation of community lies within a particular institution and, more specifically, within the community engagement initiative (Zlotkowski, 1999). Holland and Gelmon (1998) indicate that compatibility with an institution's mission is another way of understanding the community; their study shows that often partnerships originate when community organizations are successfully able to maneuver in the bureaucratic system of higher education. Thus, while community can be defined based on institutional mission and specific initiatives, the community should have capacity of agency and interaction.

EXTERNAL CONSTITUENTS

Other contributors to the field of community engagement emerge from external organizations and associations. In 2006, the Carnegie Foundation created a classification system to recognize community engagement on campus (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Because of the elective classification, "the Carnegie Foundation has brought national

attention to engagement and has served to legitimize [community engagement] work across the country" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010, pp. 632-633). Moreover, attaining the classification is indicative that a higher education institution has moved forward from sporadic community interactions to systematizing community engagement within its mission, campus culture, and actions (Driscoll, 2009). Another organization is Campus Compact, which is a national association comprising more than 1,100 colleges and universities that are implementing the third mission of higher education within their agenda (Campus Compact, 2010). Campus Compact produced its Indicators of Engagement project, which provides best practices for institutionalizing community engagement (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities also promote community engagement initiatives (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). The contributions of organizations is not limited to academically-focused groups; "national groups such as the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) have convened to broaden traditional extension programs with the aim of promoting university-wide engagement and more deeply connecting with community partners" (Weerts, 2005, p. 23). Likewise, the Research University Civic Engagement Network contributes to community engagement on campuses (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Bringle and Hatcher (2002) further comment on the various federal programs that have provided support and funds to improve community engagement on campus. For instance, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is an external constituent in community engagement.

Through its Community Outreach Partnerships Centers, numerous higher education institutions have received federal funding to create community-university partnerships (Thompson, 2002). The Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) is another organization that works on engagement for enhancing the health of individuals and communities and acts as a forum for such partnerships (Holland, 2005).

Internationally, community engagement is also a common practice in higher education. Similar to the associations based in the United States, a number of engaged universities internationally have created the Talloires Network. It encompasses more than 200 institutions from close to 60 countries (Campus Compact, 2015). In 2005, the association produced the Talloires Declaration, which strives to enhance the connection between the work of higher education institutions through education and research to serve communities at the local and global level (Watson, Hollister, Stroud, & Babcock, 2011). One of the tenets is to "foster partnerships between universities and communities to enhance economic opportunity, empower individuals and groups, increase mutual understanding and strengthen the relevance, reach and responsiveness of university education and research" (Talloires Declaration, as cited in Watson et al., 2011, p. xxiv).

Community-University Partnerships

Community-university partnerships develop in different contexts and for different purposes (see for example, Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011). McNall, Reed, Brown, and Allen (2009) explain that:

> University–community partnerships (UCP) foster partnerships between state and local organizations and university faculty members and/or UCP staff to: (1)

> address policy-, agency-, and community-defined issues; (2) promote the development and use of evidence-based models and interventions, thereby improving the effectiveness of those working to achieve healthy, fundamental, and sustainable change for individuals, families, groups, neighborhoods, and communities; and (3) facilitate and support the dissemination and use of actionable knowledge and evidence-based interventions. (pp. 320-321)

According to Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, and Lewis (2005), community-university partnerships are "an explicit written or verbal agreement between a community setting…and an academic unit to engage in a common project or common goal, which is mutually beneficial for an extended period" (p. 85). At their core, community-university partnerships are a convergence of interests with a goal of creating public good by both parties (Baum, 2000). Since these partnerships can be varied in scope and purpose, numerous elements affect whether a community-university partnership is successful and mutually beneficial.

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

Both higher education institutions and communities have benefited from participating in community engagement, through increased scholarship and civic impact (Hart & Northmore, 2011). Given their purpose and complexity of people from different sectors working together, there should be some structure to approaching community-university partnerships. According to Baum (2000), community-university partnerships need to have clear goals, action plans, and resources from the beginning. In addition, "partnerships should accommodate ambiguities and changes in the partners' identities, their relationships, and their separate and common purposes" (Baum, 2000, p. 234). From the community perspective, engaging in a community-university partnership leads

to the potential of funding, increased legitimacy, and a source of economic and social capital (Dempsey, 2010). Moreover, working with a faculty member through a community-university partnership can build knowledge, provide data analysis, impart expertise, and offer support (Price, Kready, Mogul, Cohen-Filipic, & Davey, 2012).

There are processes for successful community-university partnerships for both the higher education institutions and the community partners. Community engagement allows for diverse people from various races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and genders to come together for a common goal (Dempsey, 2010). Because of the numerous issues and the different perspectives that could be present in community-university partnerships, many elements promote the success of such endeavors. Curwood et al. (2011) explain the importance of having structures that will ensure the collaboration is mutually effective, which requires that organizational readiness is understood before commencing in a partnership. This includes examining the institutional mission, values, resources, infrastructure, and communication methods through a pre-assessment for readiness (Curwood et al., 2011). Given the dynamic characteristic of community-university partnerships, Curwood et al. recommend a continuum for collaborative readiness throughout the sustainability of the partnership.

In studying community-engaged research, Sadler et al. (2012) found that ethics play an integral part in fostering and sustaining community engagement efforts. Ethical engagement embraces collaboration that takes into account the interests, perceptions, and needs of the community members. According to Dempsey (2010), "an important step in creating ethical modes of engagement includes the acknowledgment of the ways in which

universities – as concentrations of wealth and power/knowledge – already engage their surrounding communities" (p. 383). Recognizing the social, human, and economic capital that higher education institutions have allows for an ethical basis in establishing community-university partnerships.

Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2005) created an interactive contextual model in order to support the longevity of community-university partnerships. The model tracks three phases in the process of the relationship: "gaining entry into the community…developing and sustaining the collaboration…and…recognizing outcomes and benefits" (Suarez-Balcazar et al., p. 85). Within the second phase, the actual partnership, the researchers point to six necessary elements. They include: building trust and mutual respect, creating reliable communication, appreciating diversity, focusing on knowledge building, respecting and celebrating the community, and agreeing upon an action plan (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). These elements provide the context through which community-university partnerships can benefit both parties involved.

Likewise, after analyzing various national and local projects, Holland and Gelmon (1998) posited that in order to have sustainable partnerships, there are six necessary characteristics. They are: having mutually established goals; expressing success and achievements through both partners' perspectives; giving the community majority control over the agenda; identifying community resources and strengths for capacity; defining education engagement for both partners; and evaluating the partnership by all stakeholders (Holland & Gelmon, 1998).

In addition to necessary elements, Weerts and Sandmann (2008) constructed a model for understanding community engagement while addressing the various factors that could affect partnerships. They comprise "institutional mission, culture, organizational structure, leadership, faculty involvement, governance, and power" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, p. 83). These elements primarily come from the higher education side and thus shape the effectiveness of a community-university partnership.

Benneworth (2013) also provides three criteria to ensure that community engagement is beneficial to the community. Active engagement by the community partners within the initiative or endeavor, and delineation of the benefits for the community are the first two criteria. The third criteria is having the university rely on the engagement since a greater investment will lead to achieving the mission and goals of the higher education institution (Benneworth, 2013).

ASSESSING COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

While the number of community engagement initiatives has increased drastically, understanding how to evaluate or audit such initiatives has not gained the same traction (Hart & Northmore, 2011). The diversity of engagement that occurs in higher education in terms of topics and people involved could be why there is a lack of assessment occurring (Hart & Northmore, 2011). Moreover, Holland (2009) explains that traditional assessment processes may not be applicable since community engagement does not fall into the traditional missions of teaching and research at universities. However, the Carnegie Foundation framework is one way that allows universities to document their

community engagement endeavors and understand the various types of institutional engagement they are conducting (Hart & Northmore, 2011).

According to Holland (2009), through institutionalized community engagement, assessment that is more comprehensive can be conducted. There are three areas that can be measured in terms of degrees of engagement and its alignment with institutional mission; of organizational structures necessary for community engagement; and of understanding potential areas of weaknesses and needed change (Holland, 2009). However, "while there has been considerable progress in developing indicators and benchmarking systems, the rigorous and comprehensive incorporation of community perspectives in audit and benchmarking is almost entirely absent across the higher education sector" (Hart & Northmore, 2011, p. 39). Therefore, it is important that assessment come from both sides of the partnership.

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Community engagement is no longer about using the community as a research lab or a place to bestow the university's charity (Shannon & Wang, 2010). Instead, the focus has turned towards creating mutually beneficial partnerships between a higher education institution and any given community (Shannon & Wang, 2010). According to Shannon and Wang (2010), "the university provides a foundation of knowledge, while the community provides insights to cocreate this knowledge and presents a platform for knowledge to be shared and utilized" (p. 109). Partnerships that lack significant participation from the community partner often become fraught with tension, power imbalances, and misaligned goals (Dempsey, 2010). As higher education institutions

continue to work on the third mission through community engagement and public service (Schuetze, 2010), how those relationships are formed and how higher education and the community define mutual benefit and reciprocity become important. Miller and Hafner (2008) explain that "truly collaborative relationships between universities and communities are both mutually dependent on and beneficial to one another" (p. 67). In order for a partnership to be defined as such, researchers have indicated characteristics that enhance reciprocity and benefits for institutions and community partners alike.

In current community engagement practices, mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocity are commonly attributed efforts. They are often seen within the same sentence describing community engagement. According to the Carnegie Foundation (2011), "reciprocity is the recognition, respect, and valuing of the knowledge, perspective and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration" (Reciprocity section, para. 1). When it comes to reciprocity, Allahwala et al. (2013) explain that it revolves around the benefit and achieving equality within the partnership. Hoy and Johnson (2013) affirm the importance of reciprocity from the perspective of community partners as reciprocity, along with consistency and reliability, is the cornerstone of collaborating with higher education institutions.

Bringle and Hatcher (2002) analyzed the necessary elements of successful relationships between campus partners and higher education institutions through an analysis of interpersonal relationships. They found that having a well-defined mission, a centralized college unit, compatibility, and communication within the partnership, and knowledgeable staff facilitated a partnership that was mutually beneficial (Bringle &

Hatcher, 2002). In addition, they concluded that equity, fairness, and integrity allow community-university partnerships to persevere and be effective (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Worrall (2007) observed that community partnerships excelled when set goals were met, when communication was constant, and when both partners valued the relationship.

The dynamics that come into play in a community-university partnership speak to the power imbalance and issues of legitimacy between the institution of higher education and its community partners (Northmore & Hart, 2011). This is especially salient when the partnership includes an underserved community (Northmore & Hart, 2011). In order to attain mutual benefit and reciprocity, this "require[s] universities to shift the university culture to (a) value community knowledge and share power with community stakeholders and (b) value and support…community-engaged scholarship" (Curwood et al., 2011, p. 24). Sandmann and Kliewer (2012) explain that power dynamics affect any relationship but especially relationships that tout to be mutually beneficial and reciprocal. Hence, it is the imperative of the higher education institution to create change to form a mutually beneficial partnership with their community constituents.

Community Perspectives

Most community engagement research has focused on the perspectives and experiences of higher education institutions (Adams, 2014; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, 2010). In the edited volume, *University Engagement with Socially Excluded Communities*, Benneworth (2013) voices the volume's limitation since

only the higher education side of community engagement that is expressed. Yet, understanding community perspective allows higher education partners to better comprehend the outcomes of engagement and the community partners' evaluation of it (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). It allows for the sustainability of community-university partnerships, especially when higher education institutions understand community partners' motivations and insights about the partnership (Sandy & Holland, 2006). According to the Carnegie Foundation (n.d.), an important element to effective community engagement is actively engaging and hearing the voice of community partners. However, this is easier said than done. Through the Carnegie application process, Driscoll's (2009) examination of applications found that the largest challenge for higher education institutions resided in communicating and working with the community, essentially the foundations of community engagement. Holland's (2009) study on Carnegie applications also found that "community voice can be an extraordinary indicator of an advanced engagement agenda in that it can suggest the development of trusted relationship" (p. 94). Even when studies point to community voice, it is often based on data or information from the administrators' side. For instance, Simpson (2011) conducted a cost-benefit evaluation of community engagement by surveying representative administrators from higher education institutions who had received the Carnegie Foundation Classification of Community Engagement. Although a component of the study was about perceived benefits of the engagement for the community, it was based on the perceptions of the higher education administrators and not the community

member(s) itself. Unfortunately, less empirical research is being conducted on establishing community voice and perspective in community engagement initiatives.

While few, some researchers have taken the initiative to understand why community partners engage with higher education and what elements are found to be necessary to achieve sustainable and workable partnerships. Jacob et al. (2015) reason that "stakeholders should be involved in every aspect of the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation processes....It is perhaps the single most important ingredient that is too often neglected" (p. 18).

Adams (2014) researched the features and impetus of community members engaged in community-university partnerships. Her study revealed that community members "were communicative, sought and understood multiple perspectives, and possessed a visionary quality" (Adams, 2014, p. 115). In terms of motivation, community members took various approaches, from a general community focus to the individual (Adams, 2014). Expanding on Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) model of boundary spanners in engaged partnerships, Adams determined the four roles that community members can have are "engaged employee, reciprocity recipient, connection companion, and community champion" (p. 116). According to Adams, an engaged employee is a partner who is involved in her community through her profession, while a reciprocity recipient uses her connections to external partners to increase access and recognition. A connection companion links her access to the institution with her ability to build a relationship in the community; whereas, a community champion advocates for her community and is involved in diverse initiatives in community engagement (Adams,

2014). As a result, community engagement in higher education is not limited to one type of community partner.

Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, and Goss (2002) described three points that community partners believe need to be tackled in order to have successful and mutually beneficial partnerships. The first element is the necessity of working towards maintaining partnerships. Understanding how community partners perceive the costs and benefits of entering into a community-university partnership is the second issue. The final point is addressing equity and equality in the partnership and their effect on community partners' perceptions (Leiderman et al., 2002).

Creighton (2006) conducted an action research study with community partners to develop indicators of engagement from the community perspective. While Creighton's dissertation provides a much needed analysis of community perspective, it follows the trend found in community engagement literature where a listing of elements or factors are presented for the better understanding of community-university partnerships. As a result, there is a need for recognizing more than just best practices in creating or sustaining community-university partnerships; understanding the lived experiences of community stakeholder involved in community-university partners will provide a substantial examination of community engagement (Sandmann, 2008). Moreover, literature written on higher education community engagement is primarily rhetorical (Watson, 2007); as a growing area in higher education, the need for empirical studies on community engagement and community-university partnerships is justified (Butin, 2012).

Under the umbrella of community engagement, service learning allows students to engage with community partners on a myriad of initiatives. Some scholars have studied community perceptions in connection with service learning initiatives. d'Arlach, Sanchez, and Feuer (2009) conducted a study to understand the community members' reflections from the service learning project (p. 5). According to the researchers, reciprocity and time are necessary in creating an effective partnership (d'Arlach et al., 2009). Worrall (2007) interviewed community based organizations to understand their thoughts about participating in service-learning programs through a centralized unit at a university. The themes that emerged in Worrall's study related to how community partners perceived the quality of the relationship, the benefits versus the challenges, the purpose of the partnership, and a positive perception of the university. Brisbin and Hunter (2003) conducted a qualitative study through focus groups and then developed a questionnaire to ascertain community leaders' experiences with service learning initiatives. The findings point to more involvement and communication from the higher education side to understand the needs and perspectives of the community. Thus, even in service learning literature, numerous scholars have written about the lack of community focus within community engagement (see for example, Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Wendler, 2015).

Gelmon et al. (1998) learned that community partners felt most effective when they had an active role in the partnership, when communication was maintained, when they were viewed as being assets to the partnerships, and when the partnership was sustainable. Sandy and Holland (2006) sought out community partners' perspectives on

characteristics that made for a successful partnership and on the overall interaction with a higher education institution. They found that positive relationships, communication, direct involvement by faculty, increased social capital, and facilitated future engagement were all elements important to community partners (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Weerts and Sandmann (2008) also interviewed community partners to better understand their perceptions of community engagement. A centralized approach to community engagement with a top higher education leader, such a vice chancellor, was viewed as important to community members. Community partners saw institutions with decentralized structures as challenging (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

In terms of incentives, Ferman and Hill (2004) interviewed 17 community partners to understand what motivated them to work with a higher education institution. The four reasons centered on increasing human or social capital. They comprise: the chance of acquiring resources, gaining resources in the future, increasing access with various networks, and enhancing their community organization's legitimacy (Ferman & Hill, 2004). The researchers further found that while community partners faced difficulties based on conflicting agendas, issues of capacity, and access to institutional space, community partners will continue to participate in such partnerships because "universities and communities are geographically based entities with very strong incentive to improve their shared places" (Ferman & Hill, 2004, p. 255).

Even for those community members not involved in a formal partnership, connections to a university affect their perceptions of the institution. Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper (2006) studied engagement on community members who were encouraged to

explore the resources and benefits available on a university campus. The researchers observed that community members who had attended an event on campus within the past six months had a higher perception of the institution than community members who had not attended an event (Bruning et al., 2006). Although engagement often occurs off campus, having community members and partners involved on campus could enrich community-university partnerships and ameliorate perceptions of institutions as ivory towers.

Need for Community Perspectives and Experiences

Even though community engagement descriptions include working towards mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between universities and communities, the literature is not reflecting this goal. As this chapter has shown, the research on community engagement has focused on: the higher education side, indicators for community engagement work, or a focus on a specific area within community engagement, such as service learning. Less empirical work has been done on community-university partnerships and even less on the experiences of community partners. Fitzgerald et al. (2016) recent research on changing the structures of higher education still falls short in having all representations of community engagement, including "members of the community at large. To make engagement central to the university requires input from the many communities that partner and work with university faculty and academic staff" (pp. 247-8).

Nevertheless, a number of researchers have pointed out the needed discussion and study of community experience as well as the role of mutual benefit and reciprocity from the community perspective. For instance, Omerikwa (2012) sought to understand the perspectives of faculty members in community engagement initiatives. The study recommended further exploration of other stakeholders' perceptions about reciprocity and mutuality, as well as "a need to understand the community partner's perspectives, their experience in community engaged projects and how they define mutuality and reciprocity" (p. 149). Sandmann's (2008) analysis of community engagement since the late 1990s also points to the need for empirical research, including the call found in community engagement literature for a better understanding of different perspectives within community engagement from both the higher education and community side. Fullbright-Anderson, Auspos, and Anderson (2001) acknowledge the lack of research on community perspectives; their study on community based organizations' experiences points to expanding the research on different experiences within community engagement (see also Ferman & Hill, 2004). Cox and Seifer (2005) explain that even forums through which community partners' experiences can be expressed are lacking in the field of higher education

In addition, while focused on service learning, Cruz and Giles' (2000) article, Where's the Community in Service Learning Research?, spurred numerous conversations on the lack of community side in community engagement research. Bortolin (2011) found that community engagement literature continues to privilege higher education institutions over the community; therefore, she recommends that "our research reflect the

voice of the community, the needs of the community, and the perspective of the community clearly and for the purpose of maintaining integrity and justice in this field" (p. 56). Barrera (2015) further cites the continued deficiencies in studying perspectives of community members collaborating with higher education institutions. Unfortunately, this is still an issue for community engagement literature today.

A few dissertation studies have begun to address the gap in the community side of community engagement. Lever (2011) conducted a mixed methods, descriptive study to examine community stakeholders' perceptions, needs, interests, and expectations. Similar to this proposed study, Lever sent out a survey to community stakeholders identified through their participation with 23 Campus Compact institutions and simultaneously conducted nine face-to-face interviews with selected stakeholders. The study produced needed recommendations for community stakeholders, higher education institutions, and community-university partnerships in general (Lever, 2011). Witchger Hansen's (2010) study was another dissertation study that sought out community voice in community-university partnerships. Through a case study approach, Witchger Hansen examined the experiences of community partners in service learning endeavors to understand the partners' perceptions. In addition, Harasta (2008) studied the perceptions of both university and community leaders through a phenomenological study. Even though community partners had different perceptions than university partnerships about their relationships with one another, they pointed to the importance of communication and greater involvement by both (Harasta, 2008). Caruccio (2013) also studied both community and university partners in order to understand how reciprocity is constructed

within the partnership. Petri (2012) conducted a similar study through a constructive grounded theory approach to understand how community partners in service learning perceived reciprocity. Overall, all these studies contribute to the needed research on community-university partnerships and community perspectives.

As a result, this study seeks to add to the empirical research on the community side of community engagement. While a number of research studies discussed above sought out the community perspective or themes that led to sustainable partnerships, this study intends to examine the lived experiences of community agents in community-university partnerships. This research moves beyond perspectives and best practices and adds a dimension to the literature that currently is not found, though recommended.

Conceptual Framework

Studies on community engagement have utilized various theories to better understand the processes, challenges, perceptions, and purposes of such initiatives. This section provides descriptions of four such theories that are complementary to the understanding of community engagement in general and community-university partnerships in particular. For the purposes of this study, elements of the four theories below provided a context to understanding the complexity of community-university partnerships that are mutually beneficial. After explaining each theory, this section combines the relevant elements into a conceptual framework that captures the features of community-university partnerships.

BOUNDARY SPANNING

One theory used to examine community engagement at research institutions is the boundary spanning theory. Boundary spanning focuses on building bridges between higher education and the community (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Boundary spanning, which is based on the resource dependency theory, purports "that an organization must engage in transactions with other actors and organizations in its environment in order to acquire resources" (Archibald, 2007, p. 835). According to Aldrich and Herker (1976), the function of boundary spanning is to allow information from outside an organization to come in and to allow external representation to occur. Applied to community engagement in higher education, colleges and universities need to work with their communities to produce knowledge, opportunities, and learning. Boundary spanning focuses on bringing people from different sectors or areas together to work towards a common good (Adams, 2014).

The implementation of this theory leads to effects at the institutional level and at the individual level (Sandmann, Jordan, Mull, & Valentine, 2014). For the latter, the importance of boundary spanning jobs resulted in Weerts and Sandmann (2010) identifying four types of positions: "community-based problem solver…engagement champion…technical expert…[and] internal engagement advocate" (pp. 642-649). Figure 1.2 provides definitions and a framework of the four positions to distinguish the connections of these roles to community engagement. The framework situates solver, champion, expert, and advocate based on two dimensions: a community to institutional range and a technical to relationship range. In this way, the framework identifies what

constituents are necessary for the type of community engagement proposed. Moreover, Sandmann et al. (2014) created a survey instrument to operationalize the theory of boundary spanning for those actors inside and outside the academy. By implementing a boundary spanning theory for community engagement, administration and staff can create better practices, open communication, and conflict resolution to further engagement (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

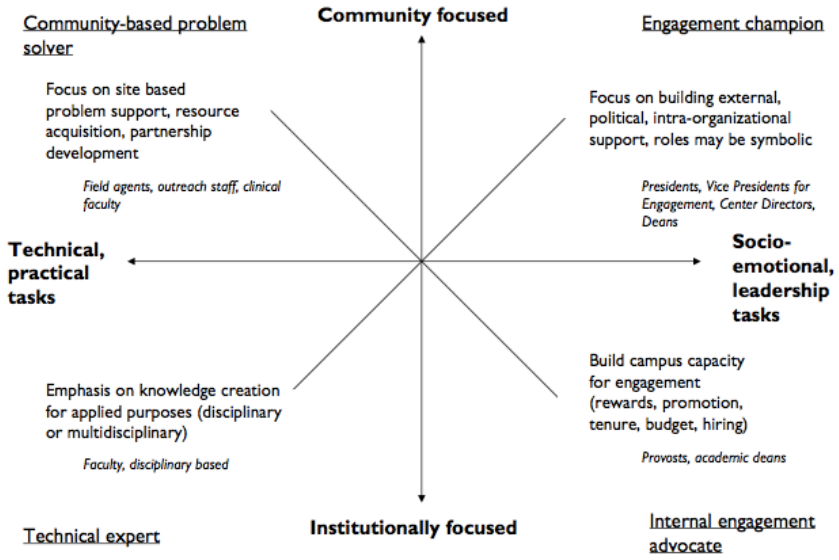

Figure 1.2: Boundary-Spanning Roles within Community Engagement. Reprinted from *Community engagement and boundary-spanning roles at research universities*, by D. J., Weerts, & L. R. Sandmann, 2010, *The Journal of Higher Education*, *81*(6), p. 721. Copyright 2010 by The Ohio State University.

Boundary spanners play pivotal roles regardless if they come from the higher education or community side. When Weerts and Sandmann (2008) interviewed

community partners, they discovered that the community partners saw the worth of their engagement through the work of boundary spanners. These boundary spanners, the academic staff involved in community engagement, had specific characteristics that allowed them to be more or less successful: listening skills, a service ethic, competent management of power, and neutrality (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Community partners viewed these characteristics of campus partners as measurements of respect and interest in the community's needs (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). According to the researchers, boundary "spanners are ambassadors of engagement, reflecting institutional epistemologies that lean either toward or away from a two-way conceptualization of knowledge flow" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, p. 97). Thus, it is through knowledge creation and certain characteristics that built connections between the community and the institution. Community partners can also be understood as boundary spanners. Adams (2014) conducted a multiple case study and found that community boundary spanners possessed communication, open-mindedness, and macro level thinking. Most community partners, who were boundary spanners, came into the partnership with a higher education entity already as capable boundary spanners (Adams, 2014). In her dissertation study, Lee (2012) implemented the boundary-spanning theory to understand how internal boundary spanners, from the university, and external boundary spanners, from the community, perceived the influence of community engagement (see also Skolaski, 2012, for a study on internal boundary spanners).

PLACE BUILDING

While place-building theory arose to evaluate the corporate world, it translates well to community engagement in higher education. Kimball and Thomas (2012) rationalize that:

> Place-building theory…explains to what degree an organization values and invests in its geographical and social location.…Community engagement… represents a kind of place-building practice whose outcomes–economic and social relations, ethical conduct, construction and treatment of built and natural environments–embody a set of intrinsic beliefs and values motivating engagement strategies. (p. 19)

The definition of place is not just that of a physical space but one in which "places take on the meaning of events that occur there, and their descriptions are fused with human goals, values and intentions" (Thomas & Cross, 2007, p. 35). Further, Kimball and Thomas utilize this theory for community engagement by examining how universities and communities build place together. The theory creates a framework of progress for the college-community connection. As Kimball and Thomas conclude, place-building theory "embrace[s] the contingent nature of engagement and continue[s] to transform community engagement from a technical practice to a deliberative, reflexive, and transparent institutional place-building paradigm" (p. 26). In this way, place building moves away from a unidirectional exchange between higher education and community and towards a co-creative collaboration between the two partners.

KNOWLEDGE THEORIES

Knowledge is an important aspect of community engagement. However, as Derrett (2013) explains, "stakeholder participation in the co-production of knowledge is

nuanced" (p. 42). As a result, the literature explains different theories involving knowledge; how community engagement creates and transfers knowledge, as well as the implications of knowledge building work. This section discusses knowledge flow theory and knowledge transfer to recognize the role knowledge plays in community engagement.

The first is knowledge flow theory. Weerts (2005) utilizes this theory to produce a conceptual framework for advancing community engagement. Havelock's (1969) theory of knowledge flow expresses the relationships between organizations and external constituents and how that relationship protects or disseminates knowledge (as cited in Weerts, 2005). There are different values that affect the transfer of knowledge, which the theory acknowledges and manages; they include elements of pride, status differences, reward, and crisis (Weerts, 2005).

Through a framework based on the theory, Weerts (2005) believes this model is a good indicator of how engagement could work and become successful. Hence, "the core concepts of the model focus on breaking down knowledge flow barriers, building capacity for university-community engagement, and identifying motivators to promote engagement initiatives" (Weerts, 2005, p. 23). Figure 1.3 is adapted from Weerts' knowledge flow model; it portrays the flow of knowledge between university and community and posits the necessary concepts for engagement. According to Sandmann (2008), theoretical background on community engagement takes two forms: one concerning partnerships and one regarding the three missions of higher education: teaching, research, and service. Hence, Weerts' use of the theory of knowledge flow studies reciprocity and engagement among such partnerships (Sandmann, 2008).

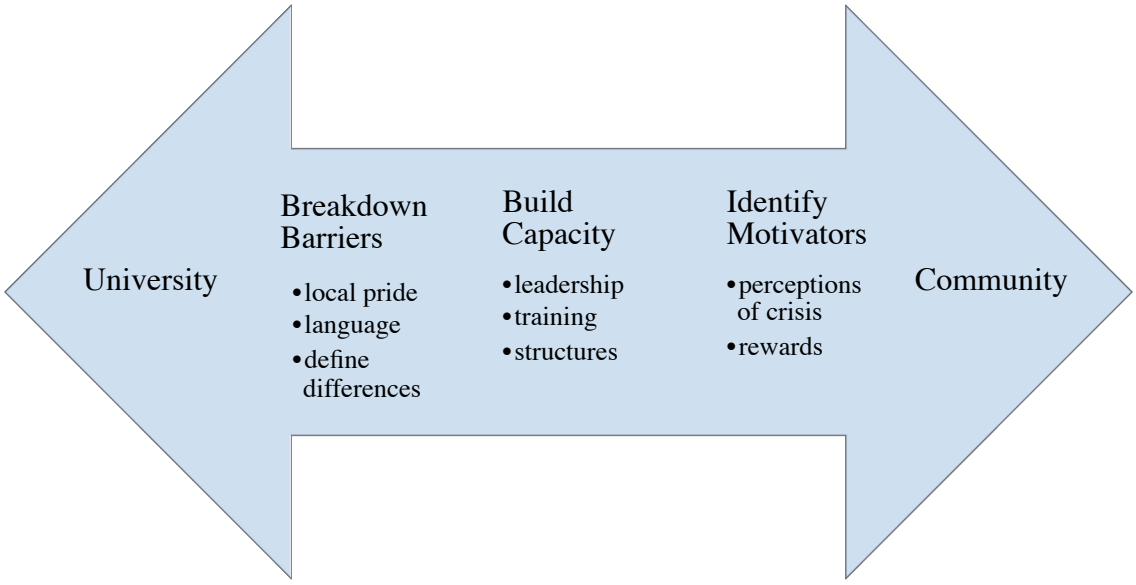

Figure 1.3: Knowledge Flow between University and Community. Adapted from *Facilitating knowledge flow in community-university partnerships*, by D. J. Weerts, 2005, *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *10*(3), p. 34. Copyright 2005 by Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement.

Another connection to knowledge in community engagement is through knowledge transfer. According to Hutchinson and Huberman (1994), knowledge transfer or knowledge dissemination as it is also known, "is the transfer of knowledge within and across settings, with the expectation that the knowledge will be 'used' conceptually (as learning, enlightenment, or the acquisition of new perspectives or attitudes) or instrumentally (in the form of modified or new practices)" (p. 28). Therefore, campus-community initiatives reinforce "that new knowledge is generated by a collective process, and that the universities cannot generate such knowledge alone" (Schuetze, 2010, p. 22). Schuetze (2010) describes theories of innovation as the basis for knowledge transfer in

community engagement; he further emphasizes the limitations in understanding the process as a transfer since that reflects a one-way approach. Jongbloed et al. (2008) explain that the purpose of the third mission of higher education is in fact knowledge transfer. Therefore, as with knowledge flow theory, how knowledge circulates to the stakeholders is an important element within community engagement in higher education.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY METAPHOR ON RELATIONSHIPS

Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, and Morrison (2010) differentiate relationships from partnerships, given that relationships can be salient whereas partnerships encompass relationships that are "characterized by closeness, equity, and integrity" (p. 5). Nonetheless, relationship building and interpersonal relationships play a significant role in how community engagement develops. In organizational theory, the use of metaphors is common. One such metaphor is that of interpersonal relationships. Organizational theory uses this analogy in connecting the partnership between a university and a community entity to understand the dynamics and changes that occur throughout the history of the partnership. Stewart and Alrutz (2012) use the metaphor of maintaining personal relationships to examine the organizational theory behind community engagement partnerships. They explain ten cruxes, or important points, of relationships that reflect engagement partnerships (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). These entail: using marketability, expanding relationships, connecting one-on-one, articulating needs and wants, being proactive, embracing differences, handling issues, dealing with conflict, prioritizing the relationship, and ending dysfunctional relationships (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). The significance of interpersonal relationships leads to the need for "clear,

consistent communication; an ability and willingness to reflect on self, others, and community; an ethic of care; a multilayered perspective; and an interest in the greater good" (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012, p. 53). As a result, these characteristics are necessary from both sides of the partnership.

Stewart and Alrutz (2012) are not the only researchers to compare engagement with relationships; Bringle and Hatcher (2002) emphasize the aspects of relationships to theorize community engagement. The authors reason that by recognizing "the phases and dynamics of relationships, a better understanding of institutional and personal action steps that might be taken to initiate, develop, maintain, and nurture a healthy partnership with the community" emerges (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002, p. 505). Consequently, examining relationships through organizational theory facilitates the perception and implementation of positive community-university partnerships.

Community-University Partnerships Framework

Given the complementary elements found in each of the above theories, to better understand mutually beneficial community-university partnerships, this study adapts elements from each. For instance, from boundary spanning, the connections between the institution and community partners, relationship and knowledge building, and bridging, or bringing together of people from diverse areas and backgrounds, are all relevant components. Similarly, place building expands on the physical place building towards relationship building that results in the co-creation of ideas and knowledge. Place building allows for the acknowledgement of values and perspectives from universities

and communities. Since community-university partnerships often originate to address common goals or concerns, the creation and transfer of knowledge become a direct and indirect outcome of the partnerships. Sometimes knowledge flow and transfer may have a unidirectional approach; therefore, it is imperative to understand knowledge building in the context of relationship and place building within community engagement. Without that, a one-way transfer of knowledge from university to community negates the goal of creating mutually beneficial partnerships. Finally, organizational theory's metaphor on relationships adds the intrinsic values found in interpersonal relationships to overall understanding of community-university partnerships. As with any relationships, partnerships between a university and community have different phases and dynamics that can change because of a number of factors, including the different perspectives that the partners have.

As a result, Figure 1.4 provides a visual as to how the elements overlap to create mutually beneficial, community-university partnerships. The conceptual framework highlights the four common elements of relationship building, knowledge building, different perspectives, and values present in the aforementioned theories. While any one of the theories provides a lens through which to examine community engagement, a combination of their similar elements allows for a richer interpretation of community-university partnerships and their complexity.

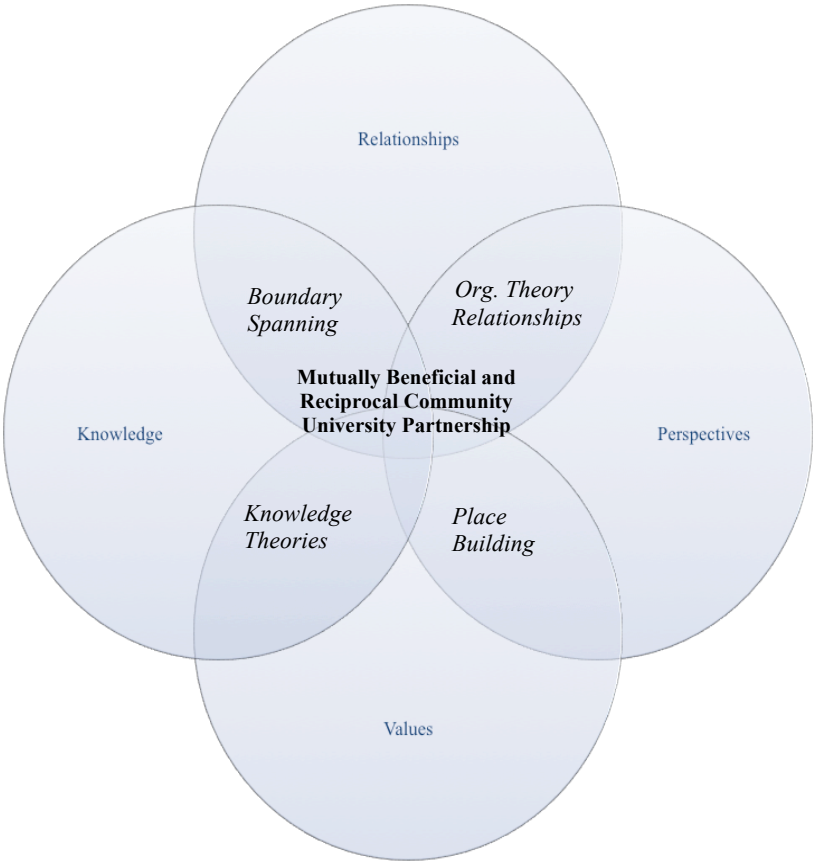

Figure 1.4: Framework on Mutually Beneficial and Reciprocal Community University Partnership with Elements and Related Theories.

Conclusion

The chapter examined the concept of community engagement in higher education. The purpose of this chapter was to show how community engagement is an increasing field of practice in higher education. While community engagement has had a difficult past in American higher education, a shift in the late 20th century encouraged higher education institutions to begin working with their surrounding communities and not at them. This change in perception led to higher education institutions fostering the idea of

scholarship of engagement. Therefore, the chapter defined engaged scholarship and the role of the third mission of higher education.

After a brief description of stakeholders in community engagement, the chapter delved into community-university partnerships. The characteristics and assessments of community-university partnerships and the concept of mutually beneficial partnerships were presented. By doing so, it provided an introduction into community perspectives on engagement with higher education institutions. The chapter pointed to a gap in the literature surrounding community perspectives on community-university partnerships. Although there are some assessments and evaluations, and national organizations have created frameworks for recognizing community engagement, more needs to be done to understand the input and perspective that community partners bring to the relationship. In addition, the chapter highlighted the role of mutually beneficial partnerships to show not only that higher education institutions have moved from a one-way approach to engagement but also that expanding on community perspectives is needed to justify a description of mutual benefit and reciprocal partnerships.

Finally, the chapter included four prominent theories used in community engagement research as a justification for connecting the relevant elements from each one to create a more comprehensive view of community-university partnerships that are also mutually beneficial. Through boundary spanning, place building, knowledge theories, and relationship metaphor from organizational theory, a conceptual framework around the four elements of relationships, knowledge, perspectives, and values was proposed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Colleges and universities are using community engagement as a means to connect with their communities; the debate about the purpose of higher education has prompted many higher education institutions to align campus resources with community needs as a way to address higher education's mission towards public good (Wiewel & Knapp, 2005). Chapter 1 introduced the role of community engagement, and the literature review in Chapter 2 highlighted the important elements and the critical need to have community perspectives within the sphere of engagement planning, assessment, and sustainability. Meeting the ideals of mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships necessitates that both sides of the partnership understand the experiences of community stakeholders. The University of Texas at Austin has made great strides in improving not only its perception with its surrounding community and beyond but has also implemented a division dedicated to community engagement. However, community engagement is not a static entity; continuous learning and work need to be invested to ensure that community engagement practices at higher education institutions meet the needs and hear the voice of their community stakeholders. As a result, this study utilized a research methodology that focuses on the lived experiences of community stakeholders in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at UT Austin.

This chapter will present the methodology used for the study. It will first describe the purpose of the study and the research questions that guided the study. As research questions guide the type of methodology used, the following section will describe why a qualitative study was chosen and why phenomenology was a justified approach for the

purpose of the study. The researcher's influence, epistemology, and positionality are also presented to better address ethical considerations within the study. A justification is made as to why The University of Texas at Austin is an ideal research study site by providing historical, societal, and racial contexts of the university and the city of Austin. The plan of how participants were selected is also described. The chapter will further describe the data collection procedures and instruments, which include a questionnaire, interviews, document analysis, as well as the idea of reciprocity. In terms of analysis, the chapter will discuss descriptive statistics from the questionnaire, codes and themes from the interviews, and validation and evaluation of the study.

Purpose of the Study

Community engagement provides an outlet for community stakeholders and higher education institutions to engage with one another and other entities to address a variety of societal, educational, economical, and other persistent issues. Higher education institutions are microcosms of the societies in which they reside, and often when an issue affects their surrounding communities, it affects those institutions. Thus working together through community-university partnerships is beneficial for both entities. However, most literature on community engagement and community-university partnerships has focused on the evolvement of community engagement in higher education (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Martin et al., 20005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008); indicators of effective community-university partnerships (Dempsey, 2010; Sadler et al, 2012; Suarez-Balcazar et al, 2005); and few empirical studies on community-university

partnerships (Creighton, 2006; Gerstenblatt, 2014). Those empirical studies that center on community engagement or community-university partnerships often are either from the higher education perspective (Gesner, 2013; Norman, 2014) or are concentrated on service learning initiatives (d'Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2009; Worral, 2007). The few studies that mention the community side of community-university partnerships underscore the need for empirical research on this area (see for example, Cruz & Giles, 2000; Sandmann, 2008; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Since community stakeholders are dealing with the issues firsthand that they are engaging with higher education institutions to work together on, then it is imperative that their experience through community-university partnerships is better understood within and outside of academe. Thus, this study sought to answer these questions:

1. How do community agents define mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?
2. How do community agents, who represent community partners with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin, make meaning of their experiences in a community-university partnership?
3. How do community agents' experiences connect to their definition of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?

Research Design

The gap in the extant literature on community engagement and community-university partnerships points to a need to understand the experiences of community

stakeholders. As research questions guide the methods of any study, the research questions stated above indicated the appropriateness of a qualitative research design. This is because qualitative research leads to an in-depth examination of a particular phenomenon (Mertens, 2010). People's meaning making of phenomena allows qualitative research to move beyond the breadth of an issue and towards the depth of it. According to Hays and Singh (2012), qualitative researchers "listen to individuals' accounts of a phenomenon, engaging actively, and integrating new perspectives into their own ways of understanding participants, the context, phenomenon, or all three" (p. 4). In addition, a qualitative approach recognizes that knowledge creation occurs from both the research and the participants (Haverkamps & Young, 2007 as cited in Hays & Singh, 2012), which mirrors a key characteristic of community-university partnerships: both sides of the partnership create knowledge. A qualitative design can further allow for a better alignment between research and practice (Hays & Singh, 2012); this is an important consideration in any field, including community-university partnerships, which are a melding of research and practice in themselves. In the following section, a further look into the characteristics and elements of a qualitative design will be expounded on to show the alignment between the research questions and focus and a qualitative study.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

Hays and Singh (2012) point out the key characteristics found in qualitative research. They are: "inductive and abductive analysis; naturalistic and experimental settings; importance of context; the humanness of research; purposive sampling; thick description; and interactive, flexible research design" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 5).

Creswell's (2013) description of qualitative research also echoes many of the same elements. Through these two types of analyses, inductive and abductive, qualitative research can work towards refining the research study and building theory while abductive analysis allows for the interpretation of new concepts that can emerge from the analysis (Hays & Singh, 2012). Creswell uses inductive and deductive logic to form complex reasoning needed throughout the research study. Morgan (2007) explains that a pragmatic approach is based on the use of abduction to connect theory and data.

The role of context is better presented in naturalistic settings; thus, this research study interviewed participants in their own natural settings–where they felt most comfortable in order to provide the needed context of their lived experience in a community-university partnership (Hays & Singh, 2012). This helped the researcher to directly engage with the participants and see how they act within their own contexts (Creswell, 2013). Patton (2002) explains that a naturalistic inquiry allows for understanding the participants' real worlds, which leads to how they experience the phenomenon.

Another element of qualitative research is the importance of context. Through a naturalistic setting approach, the research study highlights the role of context. Hays and Singh posit that the importance of context shows how participants make meaning of their social experiences. This is an essential part of a phenomenological approach as well. Context is not only important in terms of setting; it is also important for the individual as a whole (Hays & Singh, 2012). A holistic understanding of the participants will garner a more in depth approach to recognizing their experiences and meaning making. In

addition, the humanness of research, also known as *Verstehen*, identifies the subjectivity that a researcher has with her own research and participants (Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002). Through purposive sampling, a qualitative study can focus on quality–the depth that participants can bring–over quantity–their numbers for a sample size.

Thick description is another attribute commonly ascribed to qualitative research and justifiably so. According to Hays and Singh (2012), "the term thick description is used when there is ample detail about the research process, the context, and the participants. Qualitative researchers aim for insight and deeper understanding to illustrate a phenomenon fully, rather than for generalizability to the larger sample" (p. 8). However, thick description moves beyond simply providing details; rather, thick description provides a holistic view, the full picture, of the phenomenon and how the participants experience it (Creswell, 2013). Finally, having a flexible research design is imperative; Creswell describes this as an emergent design. Since qualitative research studies the 'real world' experiences, then just as things happen in the real world that lead to change, then so must that everyday flexibility be included within a study on the real word of a group of participants (Hays & Sigh, 2012).

Creswell (2013) highlights other important characteristics of qualitative research that were applied in this research study. The researcher herself is an important instrument within the study, in addition to other qualitative methods that may be utilized. While the overall goal of this qualitative study was to highlight the experiences and perspectives of the community stakeholders, the analysis was still through the lens of the researcher. That is why, throughout the research process, participant involvement were

used through validation measures to ensure that their voice and meanings are heard throughout the data and the analysis (Creswell, 2013). In addition, the use of different sources of data added to the strength of the research analysis. This allowed for a more in depth connection between the research and participants. It is also important to acknowledge the power relationship between the researcher and participants. Given the historical trends in community engagement (see Chapter 2 for more information), it was important for the research study that a concerted effort was made to minimize any power issues within the researcher-participant relationship. Creswell (2013) recommends including participant collaboration within the research study to mitigate power issues. Thus, participant involvement during the study was underscored during the data collection and analysis, and hopefully in future collaborations pertaining to this subject matter.

As a result, these descriptors about qualitative research are exactly why a qualitative research design is necessary for the purpose of this study. Creswell (2013) defines qualitative research to include "the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change" (p. 45). Community stakeholders' voices are not present in the literature nor are their experiences of being part of community-university partnerships. Through a qualitative approach, this study can begin to remedy this shortcoming in community engagement literature and research since such an approach will allow for empowerment through which the participants voice will be heard (Creswell, 2013). In the following section, a phenomenological approach will be

presented and an argument will be made as to why this approach fit well with the purpose of a research study on community stakeholders.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

This research study used a phenomenological approach in order to understand how community stakeholders make meaning of their community-university partnerships. Phenomenology "seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience" (Mertens, 2010, p. 235). Through this approach, the researcher described the commonalities between the participants' lived experiences to get to the "essence" of the experience (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). This is important in studying community partners given the diversity in background, focus area, and connections with the university. Having a way to examine what participants have in common provided a different approach to how community engagement occurs in higher education. While discussing the health field, Dyer (2004) expounds on the importance of phenomenological knowledge from community members that leads to purposeful community partnerships.

Phenomenology looks at the 'what' and 'how' of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, it moves beyond just understanding what the participants experienced in terms of being part of a community-university partnership and looks towards how they experienced it. This study adds to the literature on community engagement that primarily focuses on what the indicators of community-university partnerships are. Indeed, it adds the personal aspect that partners experience as being part of community engagement relationships.

Of the two approaches for phenomenology, this research study relied on Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology. This is because the focus of the research was on the experiences of the participants rather than on the researcher's explanation (Creswell, 2013). As Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 highlight, the voice of the community partners is what is missing in the extant literature, and if van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology had been used, then their voice would have been muted in the conversation about community engagement (as cited in Creswell, 2013). However, that was the antithesis of the research study and its overall purpose. Consequently, in Moustakas' approach, the researcher bracketed her experiences, also known as *epoche*, in order "to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). While it is difficult for the research to be devoid of the researcher's perspective, by addressing the researcher's positionality and reflexivity before data collection, the overall focus can be on the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). Overall, this allowed for a more authentic look at community partners' experiences even if the researcher is from the higher education side.

A researcher takes a number of important steps in creating a substantial phenomenological study. The first is to understand if a phenomenology was the best fit based on the research problem. According to Creswell (2013) and based on Moustakas' (1994) guidelines:

> The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon. (p. 81)

Once the phenomenon is identified, in this case, community-university partnerships, and the researcher bracketed out her experiences, then data collection can begin with participants who have experienced the phenomenon. By focusing on the two questions of what has been experienced and how it has been experienced provides the needed foundation of pinpointing the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013). Since the concentration in a phenomenological study is on the participants' perspective and the collective of their experiences, phenomenology, therefore, was the right research method for this study.

INFLUENCE OF CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Reflexivity should not occur only during data collection and analysis; it is important for researchers to be reflexive about the subject matter and methodology of their study (Morgan, 2007). Creswell (2013) further points to reflexivity as an important element in any qualitative research study since if the purpose of a study is to learn of others' points of views, it is important to display the researcher's as well. In this section and the following one about epistemological stance, I will present what influenced me towards this research area and what I hope will result from this research study. I will further describe my positionality and why it is important to explain my bias before I began the data collection phase of the study.

In 2013, as I began my PhD program, I started a graduate research assistantship within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. The first major project that I worked on was on the university's application for the Carnegie Classification for

Community Engagement. The application was an extensive process that included numerous sections and areas that addressed the complex nature of community engagement in higher education. While some areas were easier to answer than others were, the committee and I realized that the questions that we as a university needed to better address were issues surrounding community voice and whether there were systematic approaches in place to collect input and feedback. Even though The University of Texas at Austin has taken a proactive approach to engage with its community (see UT Austin, communities, and responses section for more information), the role of community voice piqued my interest. Since the role that community can play in higher education greatly depends on the college or university itself, it becomes important to see how institutions make an effort to engage not only in name but also in action with their surrounding communities. Indeed, in her assessment of Carnegie applications, Driscoll (2009) points to the common challenge that many institutions of higher education face: "communication and collaboration with community" (p. 10).

Consequently, the process of applying and receiving the Carnegie classification emphasized the importance that community engagement work continue to be engaged work: in order for it to succeed, continuous effort needs to be given by both higher education institutions and community members. While this research study did not seek to address all the challenges that arose from completing the Carnegie application, I hope to bring light to how community partners understand community-university partnerships and their role and experiences by being in one. From there, this research study could help

higher education institutions to reflect on their work with community partners and how better to align their practices with the experiences and perceptions of their partners.

EPISTEMOLOGY AND PARADIGM

Epistemology, according to Guba and Lincoln (2008), is "how we know what we know" (as cited in Hays and Singh, 2012, p. 35). The epistemology used for this study and in my own personal perspective of processing knowledge is pragmatism. While there continues to be a debate as to what encompasses an epistemology versus a paradigm or a theoretical perspective (see for example, Morgan, 2007), Hays and Singh's (2012) reasoning on this matter helps alleviate the tension. They argue that "placing an 'objective' label on this process is difficult because qualitative researchers have varying ways of conceptualizing their values, assumptions, and orientations for qualitative inquiry, in general, and for a research problem, more specifically" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 33). As a result, regardless of descriptor, the ideals of pragmatism are used within this study to better understand community-university partnerships through the lived experiences of community stakeholders.

There are a number of reasons as to why a pragmatic approach was complementary to the nature of this study. First, pragmatists move beyond the concern about truth and reality–the metaphysical (Morgan, 2007)–and rather focus on creating "useful points of connection" (Mertens, 2010, p. 36). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), a pragmatist should "study what interests you and is of value to you, study it in the different ways that you deem appropriate, and utilize the results in ways that can bring about positive consequences within your value system" (p. 30 as cited in

Mertens, 2010, p. 39). Additionally, given the perspective of pragmatists, either quantitative and/or qualitative methods are appropriate, depending on the overall purpose of the study (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2002). While this study was not a mixed methods approach that is commonly found in pragmatic approaches (Creswell, 2013; Morgan, 2007), there are elements of quantitative methodology that were used to complement the overall qualitative methodology used throughout the study (see Data Collection and Instruments section in this chapter). Third, "pragmatist researchers look to the 'what' and 'how' of research based on its intended consequences–where they want to go with it" (Creswell, 2013, p. 28; Cherryholmes, 1992; Murphy, 1999). As a result, a pragmatic approach matched this study since the focus is on the research itself and its purpose, which benefits both the researcher and the participants.

For the purpose of this study, Creswell's (2013) inclusion of pragmatism as a part of the interpretive framework for qualitative research was used. Creswell explains that "individuals holding an interpretive framework based on pragmatism focus on the outcomes of the research–the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry–rather than antecedent conditions" (p. 28). While methods are important for the research, the focal point for pragmatism is around the research issue and the questions (Creswell, 2013). In addition, pragmatism recognizes that context matters—an important consideration in qualitative research–since "scientific research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts" (Cherryholmes, 1992, p. 14). Pragmatism looks for the practicality with the research and the purpose of a research study (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell addresses five possible approaches to quantitative research that complement the interpretive framework as well as pragmatism; phenomenology is one approach.

RESEARCH POSITIONALITY

As described above, this research study stemmed from my interest and work in community engagement. As a former graduate research assistant for three years and the current assistant director for policy and community engagement in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, my role in the study must be made as transparent as possible to ensure that my perceptions and employment did not inadvertently affect the research process. The following section on site and participation selection will underscore why studying The University of Texas at Austin was a justifiable choice. In addition, Creswell (2013) explains that "when it becomes important to study one's own organization or workplace, [he] typically recommends that multiple strategies of validation…be used to ensure that the account is accurate and insightful" (p. 151). Validation strategies will be described further along in the chapter (see Validation and Evaluation section).

Therefore, it is important that I explain my position in all my interactions with the community agents. While my appointment might entail working with the community partners who serve as participants in the future, my 'power' has no effect on what happens within community-university partnership. As assistant director for policy and community engagement, my position revolves on creating policy and research that complements the needs of community partners, not detracting from their engagement with the university or the division.

Since the focus of the research was about the community partners, it is their voice, their experiences, and their perceptions that took precedence over my perceptions. Even though the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement was used as the source of the community partners, the crux of the phenomenological study was on the community partners' experiences, not on the division itself. As a result, the division lent a mechanism for finding participants and seeing where community partnerships are established, but this research study was not intended to be an assessment or evaluation of the division. In addition, through the phenomenological approach of bracketing, my position, while explicit, was not part of the critical portions of data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Anonymity, confidentiality, and trustworthiness were also important components throughout the research study to ensure that the focus stayed on the lived experiences of the participants.

Site and Participant Selection

As with any qualitative study, site and participation play a major role in purpose and scope of the study, and this study was no different. While it might be argued that choosing The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) was for convenience only, this claim takes away from the history and changes that have occurred at the institution and its communities. As will be described in the following sections, the university and the city of Austin were built around one another. The actions that happened in one sphere influenced or affected the other. Even though Austin is seen as a liberal city in the state of Texas and higher

education institutions are known for the open-minded teachings, that is not how either the city or the university first began. The University of Texas at Austin has gone through numerous iterations in its 135 year history; it followed the de jure and de facto rules of segregation. While it was the first university to become integrated in the South, this change did not occur organically but rather through court and law mandates. The university itself has been a hotbed for higher education law cases. These have shaped the way the institution is today, not only on campus but also with its surrounding and external communities. The establishment of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement speaks to the changes that have only recently begun to make necessary changes in how the university is perceived, especially by underserved communities and areas in Austin.

Given the connections between the city and the university, understanding one side helps to illuminate the actions of the other. In the following sections, a historical perspective of The University of Texas at Austin, its relationships to the city its role in court cases and racial issues, and its communities and responses are presented. The purpose of which is to show why and how the university provides an important context for understanding community-university partnerships, especially from the perspective of community stakeholders who have worked with the institution for a number of years.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Examining the community partners at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) through its Division of Diversity and Community Engagement provides a robust representation of how community engagement occurs at large, public research

universities in the United States. UT Austin is a strong reflection of the events happening not only in the city of Austin but also in the state of Texas and the nation as a whole. The history of Austin strongly connects with that of UT Austin ("Austin," 2009). In order to make a case as to why UT Austin should be used as the research site, one must understand the history of the city, its affect on university policies, and the subsequent interactions with the university's surrounding communities.

UT Austin and The City of Austin

People describe Austin, Texas in many ways: as the live music capital of the world (Humphrey, 2013), the home to millions of bats ("Austin," 2009), and the city for keeping it weird (Skop, 2009). Even though Austin's culture has led to a certain reputation, its history, demographics, and transformations provide a different perspective. The same can be said of UT Austin. As the city of Austin expanded and changed, so too did the university; indeed, the growth between the two was parallel. For a long time, the university was a true reflection of the city's attitudes and social mores towards wealth, diversity, and change. While Austin has become an economic and high technology hub, today, it is the most economically segregated city in the nation (Zehr, 2015).

This is not the only type of segregation that plagues Austin. In 1928, a city plan was created to focus on strengthening the educational, residential, and cultural aspects of Austin, the first such plan since Austin's founding (Humphrey, 2010). According to Busch (2013):

> The…focus was land use, through zoning, in an effort to maintain the nonindustrial, nonurban qualities that characterized Austin in the city's residential districts on the Westside. Keeping downtown and West Austin as pastoral as

> possible meant relocating residents and industries that did not fit the city's desired image; thus, the initial purpose of the city's Eastside, at the time a relatively integrated space, was to hide undesirable but necessary components of the city's fabric as well as racial minorities. (p. 981)

Thus, the early 1900s marked the overt racial divide between Whites and African Americans in Austin and the beginning of East Austin as an African American enclave. From the 1928 city plans to present gentrification practices, the city has created spatial divisions among its population. According to McDonald (2012), "by the end of the 1920s[, Austin] was virtually a microcosm of the statewide picture, particularly in terms of the proportion…of African Americans" (McDonald, 2012, p. 4). The city even physically relocated schools to East Austin and closed African American schools elsewhere to further push African Americans to East Austin (Spence, Straubhaar, Tufekci, Cho, & Graber, 2012).

At the same time, UT Austin became an island that separated itself from much of the city. These often physical separations–the university built a fence around the campus in the 1960s, and Austin turning East Avenue into I-35 created a permanent divider (Skop, 2009)–have led to perceptions by many that the university is not concerned with its surrounding community and underserved populations. In addition, Tretter (2012) argues that the racial divisions in Austin have remained unchanged since the early city plans, and the changes seen today are only a result of gentrification processes; Busch (2013) states that the segregation trends of today "mirror those from the 1960s" (p. 977). All of these issues culminate into understanding the city as a place of prosperity for some and an unwelcoming one for others.

UT Austin, Race, and Cases

These issues have implications for UT Austin including how the surrounding communities and beyond view the actions of the university. The University of Texas at Austin has historically reflected the city and state's treatment of African Americans, and the creation of East Austin and the university's subsequent mistreatment of that community harken to the struggles of desegregation fought on campus and in the courtroom. UT Austin has and continues to be an important battleground for racial justice and diversity. Desegregation has been an influential yet hard fought struggle that has changed the way UT Austin is today. When it first opened, the university was segregated by both policy and social mores. According to Lavergne (2011), "Texas constitutions from the days of the Republic to the time of Heman Sweatt were the products of a southern-leaning white policies class" (p. 66). Given that UT Austin is a public institution, state policies translated into the university's actions (Lavergne, 2011). Thus, the policies of separate but equal from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruled the educational field and allowed the university to stay segregated for more than 60 years (Lavergne, 2011).

The first official step towards desegregation did not start until 1946 when Heman Marion Sweatt applied to UT Austin's law school (Lavergne, 2011). Sweatt was an African American man from Houston, Texas (Lavergne, 2011). Even though Sweatt had all the academic qualifications necessary for admissions, he was denied solely based on his race; as a result, Sweatt challenged the university's decision (Lavergne, 2011). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chose UT Austin

as the site to bring suit against the issue of separate but equal given the moderate racial landscape of the state (Goldstone, 2006); however, 85 percent of Texans in 1947 opposed integrating UT Austin (Lavergne, 2011). The issue reached the Supreme Court in *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), which was the first instance where the idea of separate but equal was successfully challenged at the judicial level (Lavergne, 2011).

The next step in desegregation came through another Supreme Court case. In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), the court finally overruled the idea of separate but equal that *Sweatt* challenged four years before (Lavergne, 2011). The unanimous opinion of the court explained that "separate facilities are inherently unequal" (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954). Since the court required the desegregation of all education, UT Austin's Board of Regents on July 8, 1955 declared that qualified students would be admitted, regardless of the programs' availability at Black institutions (Goldstone, 2006). While Texas became the first state in the South to integrate all its higher education institutions, UT Austin enacted a policy to restrict enrollment that required aptitude and subject tests and formula "by which prospective students would be required to reach certain standards" (Goldstone, 2006, p. 41).

Other court cases and policies also affected UT Austin. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided a chance for the university to implement affirmative action to increase the enrollment of underserved populations (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Yet, it was the idea of affirmative action that changed many policies in the state and at the university. In 1996, the *Hopwood v. Texas* case challenged the affirmative action policies at UT Austin. Like in *Sweatt*, the issue was around the UT law school. Because of *Hopwood*, the university

could no longer use race as a factor in admission policies; Texas institutions had to practice a race neutral approach (Goldstone, 2006). As a response to this case, the Texas legislature passed House Bill 588, the Top Ten Percent Rule (Top Ten), wherein all Texas students who graduate in the top ten percent of their class will receive automatic admission to public institutions in the state (Bowen & Bok, 1998). While it is meant to be race neutral, this policy is predicated on the residential segregation, and thus, school segregation in Texas.

The 2000s marked another era of action against affirmative action. Both *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) challenged the use of race in admissions at the University of Michigan. While the use of race was deemed a quota in *Gratz*, in *Grutter,* the Supreme Court upheld the holistic admissions approach that included affirmative action. Because of the *Grutter* decision, UT Austin was once again able to use race in its admission practices, as long as it was through a holistic approach. Most recently, UT faced another challenge in its admission policy in *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013) and *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2016). Fisher argued that since Top Ten allowed for diversity, then even the holistic approach that UT utilizes should be unconstitutional. However, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the university, reaffirming the compelling interest of diversity on a college campus.

UT Austin, Communities, and Responses

While policies and court decisions have affected UT since the 1950s, contextual factors have also affected the university. Two major issues arose: the first was the acquisition of land by the university, especially in East Austin. The second was the

behaviors of UT Austin and the subsequent perceptions by underserved communities in Austin, particularly African American ones. The two issues are interrelated and continue to affect the university. As the university continued to grow, so did its land acquisitions, through gifts or purchases (Battle, 2010). However, in the 1980s, the Board of Regents began to quietly buy land in the Blackland, an area in East Austin, which by the late 1970s had a number of African Americans (Blackland Community Development Corporation, 2014). The issue of eminent domain was raised because of the actions of the university at that time; UT Austin was covertly taking over land to further its reach in East Austin (Luther, 2014; Tretter, 2016). The Regents reasoned that the expansion was necessary if UT Austin was to continue growing its reputation and its international recognition; this same argument was made before in the 1960s as the university expanded to the east and southeast but not to the north or west (Tretter, 2016). Regardless of the community's wants and reactions, the university continued to buy land and tear down houses. As has been the case since the university's founding, the city of Austin rallied around the expansion actions. Lester Palmer, Austin mayor in 1966, stated, "a few people may be inconvenienced but on the other hand many hundreds of thousands of young students may not be afforded an opportunity to attend the university" (City of Austin, 1966, as cited in Tretter, 2016, p. 48).

The Regents publicly declared the expansion into the Blackland a necessity, and since the land prices were cheaper, it was deemed a bargain for UT Austin. Racially, this declaration of imminent domain affected an already ill-treated community; according to the racist theory of value, East Austin and its inhabitants were seen as less valued than

Whites in Austin (Tretter, 2016). As Tretter (2016) succinctly states, "yes, the land was less expensive, but this was the result of decades of antiblack racism in Austin" (p. 49). This added to the already negative relationship between African Americans and the university. The secretive way in which the university went about acquiring land continued and led to an almost ten year long battle between Blackland residents and UT Austin (Tretter, 2016). Through community and student activism, the expansion was successfully thwarted.

The 1980s and onward marked an open discussion about how engaged the university is and how it should connect with the community. However, the storied history between UT Austin and its community was exacerbated by the actions in the Blackland area. The spatial separation between the university, the city, and its residents has also affected the perceptions that people have about the university. One of the first steps to begin addressing community perceptions was through the Commission of 125, which was convened in 2002 (The Commission of 125, 2016). Its purpose was "to express a vision of how The University of Texas can best serve Texas and society during the next 25 years" (The Commission of 125, 2016a, para. 1). Three of the subsequent recommendations related to community and societal needs. Recommendation 14 posits that "the University should serve Texas by marshaling its expertise, programs, and people to address major issues confronting society at large;" Recommendation 15 states, "the University must provide the broadest and most effective access to its knowledge and collections in order to share its assets with Texas and the world at large;" and finally, Recommendation 16 expresses that:

> The University's communications efforts must convey the value of higher education to society. In addition, UT must clarify its key strengths and distinctive qualities and devise ways to communicate them more coherently and consistently to its constituencies at all levels. (The Commission of 125, 2016b)

As a result, it was from the Commission of 125 and its recommendations that UT Austin increased engagement with its communities.

Fourteen years have passed since the Commission of 125 made its recommendations, and changes have occurred at UT Austin. In 2006, then President Williams Powers, Jr. established the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE). The Division has grown substantially over the years to encompass over 400 employees, 50 units, and a budget of $50 million (Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, 2016a). DDCE has four, complementary strategic goals, one of which is community engagement: "cultivating mutually beneficial community-university partnerships that further the mission of UT to serve Texas and beyond, with an emphasis on historically and currently underserved communities" (Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, 2016b, para. 4). With over 400 community partners, the Division is addressing the history of the University and improving upon the recommendations set forth in the Commission of 125. The Division has won numerous awards and recognitions given its work with the community at the local, state, regional, and national levels, including the Carnegie Foundation's elective Community Engagement Classification, The President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Through DDCE, the university is seeking out better community engagement

practices as well as recruitment and retention programs for underserved populations (Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, 2016a).

Taking into consideration the history, consequences, and current actions, having The University of Texas at Austin as the study site illuminated how societal, historical, and racial issues affect a higher education institution and its engagement with its communities. While UT Austin, unfortunately, is not unique in its historical actions with underserved communities, as an institution, it continually seeks to remedy the past by making stronger relationships and bonds with the community it serves.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Given that the DDCE has over 400 community partners, it was essential that participants were chosen based on important considerations. The first was having not only the experience of being in a partnership but, more importantly, being able to articulate their experience (Creswell, 2013). While I was able to obtain the contact information for the DDCE's community partners, more needed to be done to ascertain the connection before I could use purposive sampling to recruit participants. For this study, participants were those community partners identified by the DDCE as the point person of contact and/or president/leader of that organization–the community agents. Oftentimes, there is fluidity in who interacts with a university in terms of community engagement; however, for the purpose of this study, the focus was on those community agents who are actively engaged and in communication with the DDCE. To better identify these community agents, I was in discussion with leaders from the division to ascertain exactly whom to contact.

As will be expanded on in the data collection section, the first contact with all community partners was through a questionnaire that provided demographics as well as questions that helped elucidate whether the community partner would be willing to discuss his or her experiences through a phenomenological study (see Appendix A). The DDCE community partners received an email explaining the purpose and objective of the study with a link to a questionnaire (see Appendix B). While questions in the questionnaire could be useful for the phenomenological study, they did not provide the opportunity to delve into the lived experiences of the potential participants. Rather, the questionnaire provided the context to find the requisite sample group.

From the questionnaire respondents, a nested sampling approach was taken to recruit participants to be interviewed for the research study. According to Mertens, nested sampling is when "a subset of those in one method of the study are chosen to be in the other part of the study" (Mertens, 2010, p. 326). Nested sampling is often used in mixed methods studies. While this research study does not entail an authentic mixed methods approach, since the primary data source will be through the interviews, the quantitative data from the questionnaire allowed a different perspective on community engagement to be presented. Based on the questionnaire respondents who indicate that they would be willing to participate in the research study, purposeful sampling was employed. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to identify possible participants who could provide extensive information about the subject matter through specific criteria (Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Three basic criteria were used for all participants: being the point person–the community agent–of the partnership; having

sustained a partnership for longer than a year with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement as an individual but represent a partnership that is longer than two years; and representing an organization that is based in Austin, Texas.

Specifically, the study employed maximum variation sampling. According to Creswell (2013), "this approach consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the…participants, and then selecting…participants that are quite different on the criteria" (p. 156). To create a more diverse group of potential participants, this study had an internal metric based on the perceptions about mutual benefit and reciprocity within their community-university partnership with the DDCE. In the questionnaire, a number of questions posit how the community partners described their perspective on their partnership being mutually beneficial or reciprocal. Responses are grouped based on their Likert scale responses of: disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree on whether they perceived mutual benefit or reciprocity was apparent in their partnership. The distribution for this grouping was made once the questionnaires were sent back for analysis. In this way, a more equitable breakdown of engagement responses was presented. Since there was a possibility that those community partners who are more engaged with the division were more likely to respond to the questionnaire versus those who have low engagement, adjustments were made to this metric when enough time has passed for a substantial amount of partners to respond to the questionnaire.

Once potential participants indicated on the questionnaire their willingness to be part of the research study, and they meet the above criteria, I sent out a formal invitation email (see Appendix D). In the email, a full description of the study as well as my

positionality were explained. The email also included the Carnegie Foundation definition of community engagement; however, since one of the research questions was to understand how community stakeholders define mutual benefit and reciprocity in community-university partnerships, no other definitions were presented in either the email or the subsequent interviews.

I interviewed 15 community agents. Other examples of phenomenological studies related to community engagement have similar sample sizes. In her study of private school leaders in school-community partners, Norman (2014) interviewed 10 leaders; Gerstenblatt's (2014) examination of community partners' experiences in service learning included interviews with nine partners; and Gesner's (2013) dissertation study on higher education leaders engaging in mutually beneficial community partners included 10 interviews. Phenomenological studies benefit from having five to 25 participants (Polkinghoren, 1989, as cited in Creswell, 2013). With the addition of the selected criteria from the questionnaire and having over 400 community partners to contact, a sample size of 15 was a reasonable representation of the larger community partner pool.

Data Collection and Instruments

An element of a phenomenological study is using multiple sources of data collection (Creswell, 2013). This allowed the data to help answer the underlying questions of phenomenology: what was experienced and how was it experienced (Creswell, 2013). At the same time, pragmatism influenced the data collection by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Having a questionnaire sent out to all

400 DDCE partners added quantitative data, and the interviews provided the depth of information needed for a phenomenological study.

QUESTIONNAIRE

While not a traditional part of a phenomenological study, this pre-interview questionnaire had the capacity to canvas all the community partners that the DDCE has. As a result, the questionnaire was sent out through email with an explanation of the overall research study. The community partners were informed of the purpose and scope of the questionnaire. The last question asked the participants if they would be willing to be part of a dissertation study that will include an interview format (see next section). The questionnaire was voluntary and could be anonymous to those community partners who chose not to include their names and contact information. Even though the questionnaire touched upon some of the issues that arose during the interviews, the responses did not affect who was chosen; rather, only the questions that address the criteria were used for recruiting interviewees. As a result, the interviews should not be seen as follow-ups to the questionnaire; the two methods, while complementary, provided a different lens of understanding community engagement at The University of Texas at Austin. Hence, the questionnaire provided a better understanding at a larger scale of how community partners perceive their engagement with the university and the DDCE.

The format of the questionnaire and its questions were based on the research on community engagement as well as the theories used for the conceptual framework. Appendix C has the questions' connections to the theories. Having only one type of question format limited the manner in which community partners can engage with the

questionnaire; it also went against the underlying purpose of community engagement–relationship building. Therefore, a mix of Likert scale and open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire. Questions that related to similar elements or issues were grouped together, with no more than six items within the grouping. In terms of Likert scale, the questionnaire utilized five points: strongly disagree/dissatisfied to a strongly agree/satisfied scale with a neutral option. One question had a scale of poor, average, and excellent with an open-ended follow-up question for those who selected poor or average. This allowed a better understanding of what challenges and issues the community agent faced. The questionnaire concluded with open ended-questions. Since the community partnerships are unique and varied in terms of scope and subject matter, it was important that the questionnaire captured all the types of challenges and opportunities that the community agents perceived.

The questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics and took participants around 20 minutes to complete. Since most of DDCE's community partners have good connections with at least one staff or high-level administrator, I believe that an online questionnaire provided the best response rate given the high number of community partners. Using Qualtrics was also more economical, since it is free for UT Austin staff and students.

Given the quantitative element of a question, the target population was community-university partners engaged with four-year research institutions in community engagement. The sampling frame was the list of community agents from that the division had complied. Before releasing the questionnaire, I discussed with top

DDCE administrators the contacts to ensure that those on the list were indeed the community agent for that partnership. As a DDCE employee, I had no trouble in compiling this list as well as garnering feedback and guidelines from other DDCE staff. Since the questionnaire was administered via email, I sent out the link to all the DDCE community agents who have contact information on file. In addition, since DDCE community partners have already formed some kind of relationship with a DDCE employee, through emails, communications, and even phone calls, I could ensure that the questionnaire received a solid response rate. Follow-up emails to remind the community agents about the questionnaire were also administered to ensure a timely response and to begin recruiting community agents for the interviews.

To safeguard that the dissemination of the questionnaire would not adversely delay the interviews, I reached out to the community partners who met the criteria and indicated willingness to participate in the interview section of the study as soon as they submitted their questionnaire. Within the data analysis section of study, the questionnaire results provided a larger picture of community partners' perspectives, whereas the interviews showed an in-depth analysis of what and how community partners experience their part in a community-university partnership.

INTERVIEWS

The primary research method for this study was through semi-structured interviews with the 15 community agents, at a location chosen by the interviewee. Interviews are often used in qualitative research since they provide many perspectives and points of views necessary to create an in depth examination of a phenomenon

(Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2010). According to Creswell (2013), having around 10 participants "is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (p. 161). In addition, the interview consisted of open-ended questions. Creswell stresses the need for flexibility in the research design so that adjustments can be made to interview questions after meeting with initial participants.

Participants participated in one interview, each lasting at least one hour, as well as follow-up communication through email or phone. This built rapport and allowed for reflection and introspection to be addressed during the follow-up interactions. Esterberg (2002) remarks on the importance of rapport in interviews, for the interview is to establish relationship between the participant and research (as cited in Hays & Singh, 2012). While phenomenological studies can include a number of interviews, it became evident in this study that one interview session would suffice; "phenomenology can involve … only single or multiple interviews with participants" (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

A common approach to the phenomenological interview is that espoused by Seidman (2006) (as cited in Hays & Singh, 2012). Seidman (2006) explains that "interviewing…is a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience" (p. 8). There are three phases of his interviewing method, all of which focus on finding the essence of the phenomenon—the overall purpose of a phenomenological study (Hays & Singh, 2012). The first phase focuses on life history; the second is on the experience itself; and the third phase is on meaning making (Seidman, 2006). Since Hays

and Singh (2012) reaffirm meaning making is done throughout the interview process, it is possible to combine the second and third phase. With the additional information presented through the questionnaire responses, one interview with a follow-up email or phone call was deemed appropriate for this study. In addition, interactive interviewing was employed during the sessions. This allowed for a more conversational form of interviewing as well as lessening the power imbalance that can occur in an interview (Hays & Singh, 2012). Most importantly, "participation in this type of interviewing allows for greater action and advocacy" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 239). Including methods that ensure community voice were at the forefront was particularly important, given the objective of the research study.

The semi-structured approach also had its benefits. By using an interview guide and not pre-set questions, the interviews were adjusted per the needs of the interviewee and the direction the conversation took. The interview protocol and the invitation email are found in Appendix E and D, respectively. In addition, an informed consent form (Appendix F) was presented to the interviewees before the interview began. The interview protocol included prompts about the community agent's experience as a community partner; the historical, societal, and racial context of the development of the partnerships; experiences with the university in general and with DDCE in particular; and how they defined the ideas of mutual benefit and reciprocity. Using a semi-structured, open-ended question, in-depth interview delivered "a richer picture of a phenomenon under investigation" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 239). This also allowed the participants to have more control of the interview (Hays & Singh, 2012). It also gave the researcher the

opportunity to ask follow-up questions and probes to make sure that the participants' experiences were fully expressed.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

During the interviews, I ask for any relevant documentation the participants may have regarding around the partnership with DDCE and/or UT Austin. I also searched the utexas.edu website and conducted a Google search to find any relevant information about each partner and/or community agent. However, the most important source of documents was from the participants themselves. Whatever they share could have the potential to add more to their lived experiences than documentation found by the researcher. Indeed, having different sources of data provides a more inclusive examination of the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Unfortunately, only a few participants had documents to share. In addition, I wrote field notes during the interview sessions. These included making comments and notes during the interviews themselves and writing out a more thorough memo once the interview concluded. This was done as soon as possible, in order to recollect and make note of relevant information.

In addition, the type of field notes used was an important consideration; Boddan and Biklen (2003) explain the difference between descriptive and reflective field notes (as cited in Hays & Singh, 2012). Given that a phenomenological study includes bracketing out the researcher's perspective and opinions as much as possible, the researcher only used descriptive field notes within the data analysis section. According to Hays & Singh (2012), "descriptive field notes capture details of what occurred in a setting…qualitative researchers are able to provide detailed depictions of participants and

the physical setting; thick descriptions of specific events; and paraphrases, summaries, or verbatim quotations from participant conversations" (p. 228). Field notes are another strategy for building trustworthiness into the research study. Furthermore, all these documents were coded and analyzed concurrently with the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts.

RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is one of the foundational characteristics of modern-day community engagement. It is important that this concept was achieved throughout the entire research process. As a result, interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and sent to the participants, so they can make any changes or clarifications. In addition, the participants were encouraged to contact the researcher for a follow-up discussion once the transcripts had been shared. Reciprocity is also known as member checking, which is necessary for building trustworthiness within the study (Hays & Singh, 2012).

The questionnaire was another opportunity to disseminate more information to the participants as well as the community partners in DDCE. Therefore, the questionnaire served a dual purpose of complementing the interviews within this research study and providing information to share with both DDCE administrators and DDCE community partners. The researcher also solicited feedback about the questionnaire as an opportunity for supplemental information and perspectives to be incorporated into the questionnaire analysis. Creswell (2013) highlights the importance of reciprocity, "giving back to participants for their time and efforts," within any research study (p. 55). Given the historical practices in community engagement, where a researcher came into a

community and left based on his needs rather than the community's, it was imperative that acknowledging and involving the community partners throughout this research study was achieved.

Data Analysis

Empirical studies on community engagement, let alone community partners in community-university partnerships, are uncommon in the extant literature and research. Thus, a conceptual model relating to community partners has not yet been established. There are, however, a number of theories that have been applied to community engagement, though none fully encompass the entire experience of being part of a community-university partnership. This research study relied on elements from boundary spanning theory, place building, knowledge theories—knowledge flow and transfer, and relationship metaphor from organization theories. A pragmatic epistemology relies on studying issues in multiple ways, through different processes, depending on the result of eliciting positive change (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). As a result, they each have separately been applied to community-university partnerships despite elements of these theories not being combined previously (see Chapter 2 for more information). Combining theories is compatible with pragmatism since "it is not the abstract pursuit of knowledge through 'inquiry' that is central to a pragmatic approach, but rather the attempt to gain knowledge in the pursuit of desired ends" (Morgan, 2007, p. 69).

Two other elements of pragmatism also shaped the data analysis section: intersubjectivity and transferability. Through intersubjectivity, how the research is

communicated and disseminated was important for both the participants and the intended audiences of the research; the shared meaning of the research to various audiences is foundational from a pragmatic stance (Morgan, 2007). Thus, while the data for this research study was collected from the community partners, the analysis can and should be relevant to all sides of the community-university partnership, even those who are not directly in the partnership itself. Expanding on the classical idea of transferability in qualitative research, Morgan (2007) posits that "an important question is the extent to which we can take things that we learn with one type of method in one specific setting and make the most appropriate use of that knowledge in other circumstance" (p. 72). Transferability is important because it answers the 'so what' question that arises from many research studies: once this knowledge is gained, what can be done with it? Moreover, it is through transferability of such research that the end goal of creating a positive impact can be attained.

Various tools were used to ensure that all data collected was highlighted within the analysis section. The study utilized Qualtrics for the questionnaire and Dedoose for the data analysis from the interviews, questionnaire responses, and any documentation. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and inputted in Dedoose for coding. Any participant feedback was also be uploaded to Dedoose to create a more holistic understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

For this phenomenological study, Creswell's (2013) adaption of Moustakas' (1994) method was utilized. This provided a structured approach to analyzing the data. The first step was to "describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under study"

(Creswell, 2013, p. 193). The intent was for the researcher to describe her experiences; since bracketing is an important consideration in phenomenology (Creswell, 2013), this section will not be in the data analysis but rather in this chapter (Chapter 3) as it allows the positionality of the researcher to be separate from the experiences of the participants. Therefore, the first step in the data analysis was coding the interview transcripts to find meaningful points. Once that was accomplished, grouping the statements into themes was the next step. This was followed by textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon: the 'what' and the 'how' questions of a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013). The study concluded with essence of the phenomenon.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

While the responses from the questionnaire did not shape the overall study, they provided descriptive statistics of the community partners within DDCE. Using Qualtrics, frequency distributions were created for each question. Showing a fuller picture of the community partners was the purpose of using the questionnaire responses within this study. In addition, the open ended questions that relate to the study's three research questions were coded along with the interview transcripts (see Codes and Themes section) to find any connections between the sample size studied and the pool from which they are chosen.

CODES AND THEMES

As the first step in analyzing a phenomenological study, coding was needed to sort the extensive amount of data into different categories. Corbin and Strauss (2008) delineate the process of coding:

> Coding is more than just paraphrasing. It is more than just noting concepts in the margins of the filed notes or making a list of codes as in a computer program. It involves interacting with data (analysis) using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between data, and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions. (p. 66)

Creswell (2013) recommends starting with a few codes–five to six–then eventually expanding to no more than 25-30 codes. To do so, two approaches were taken in the coding process: open coding and axial coding. According to Hays and Singh (2012), "open coding is a type of wide review of the data answering the question, 'What large general domains am I seeing in the data?'" (p. 344). Moustakas (1994) recommends listing out relevant points made in the transcriptions, known as horizonalization: "horizonalizing the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value" (p. 118). Therefore, open coding allowed for those significant points and phrases to be collected into codes. Corbin and Strauss (2013) explain that open coding involves examining the data through different lenses and possibilities in order to conceptualize the data.

While axial coding was the next step, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008), it should occur simultaneously with open coding. Benaquisto (2008) defines axial coding as "the phase where concepts and categories begin to stand out are refined and relationships among them are pursued systematically" (p. 51). The codes used to

conceptualize the data emerged from the transcriptions, document analysis, the research questions, and the conceptual framework for this study. Given the pragmatic approach that Corbin and Strauss (2008) take, it is not surprising that they remind researchers that "the actual procedures used for analyzing data are not as important as the task of identifying the essence or meaning of data…the best approach to coding is to relax and let your mind and intuition work for you" (p. 160).

Once the researcher discovered the codes within the data, the codes were then combined to create themes, or as Moustakas (1994) labels it, clustering the meaning or meaning units. Creswell (2013) defines themes as "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (p. 186). From the themes, the phenomenological study then addresses the textural and structural descriptions. According to Moustakas, the textural description "facilitate[s] clear seeing, makes possible identity, and encourages the looking again and again that leads to deeper layers of meaning" (p. 96). Put simply, the textural describes 'what' participants experienced through the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Structural descriptions, on the other hand, are "the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced…the 'how' that speaks to the conditions that illuminate the 'what' of experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). While each individual has her own textural and structural descriptions, Moustakas further recommends clustering those descriptions into composites to see the group experiences of the participants. Finally, defining the textural and structural descriptions from the themes culminated into a portrayal of the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

VALIDATION AND EVALUATION

Creswell (2013) highlights the necessity for validation of a qualitative study in general and the evaluation of a phenomenological study in particular. This section will examine the parameters and how they were addressed within the study. Creswell describes eight validation strategies found in qualitative studies as: "prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation; peer review or debriefing; negative case analysis; clarifying research bias; member checking; rich, thick description; and external audits" (pp. 250-252). Creswell recommends at least two strategies to be employed in any study.

For this research study, a number of these strategies were relevant. These strategies also overlap in terms of the purposes and objectives. Prolonged engagement was a necessary part of this research study, especially given the researcher's positionality and the future consequences of this study for the community partners and DDCE. The researcher encouraged ongoing conversations with the community partners through the research study and afterwards. This included follow-ups with the participants to ensure that the information was correct from both sides. Triangulation: the study implemented different methods and theories throughout the stages of the research study, including a conceptual framework comprised of various theories, as well as interviews, document analysis, and a questionnaire to obtain different data sources. Peer review: having individuals outside of the research provide feedback allowed for the expression of different perspectives. The dissertation committee as well as the researcher's cohort members served as peer debrief-ers throughout this process. Research bias: a number of

scholars point to the importance of clarifying a researcher's positionality through different points in the research (see for example, Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Chapter 3 served as the vehicle for highlighting this researcher's positionality as a way to define potential bias and to bracket her perceptions outside of the experiences of the study's participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Member checking: as explained above in reciprocity, participants received their interview transcriptions and had the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the research process. Finally, rich, thick description: phenomenology relies on providing such descriptions to explain the lived experiences of the participants.

While the evaluation of a phenomenological study, or any study for that matter, occurs after the research is conducted, Creswell (2013) poses five questions to understand the quality of the study. By presenting them here before the research begins, they helped frame the direction and purpose of the study. The five questions are as follows:

1. Does the author convey an understanding of the philosophical tenets of phenomenology?
2. Does the author have a clear "phenomenon" to study that is articulated in a concise way?
3. Does the author use procedures of data analysis in phenomenology, such as the procedures recommended by Moustakas (1994) or van Manen (1990)?
4. Does the author convey the overall essence of the experience of the participants? Does this essence include a description of the experience and the context in which it occurred?

5. Is the author reflexive throughout the study? (Creswell, 2013, p. 260)

The researcher has used Chapter 3 to begin answering these questions. Assessing the validity of a study is important since it speaks to whether the study is "well grounded and well supported" (Creswell, 2013, p. 258). As little empirical research has been conducted in the area of community-university partnerships, it is critical that this researcher employed the necessary strategies to ensure that the study's validity is substantial.

RESEARCH TIMELINE

The following was a proposed timeline for the necessary research activities:

- September 2016: dissertation proposal meeting and IRB submission
- October 2016- January 2017: data collection and preliminary analysis
- January- February 2017: data analysis
- February-March 2017: chapters 4, 5 and 6
- April 2017: dissertation defense meeting

Summary

This chapter has delved into the methodological approach proposed for the research study on community agents' lived experiences in community-university partnerships. The research study included a phenomenological approach with the addition of a questionnaire that canvased a substantial amount of community partners. The core of the study relied on a phenomenological study of the lived experiences of 15 community agents, how they made meaning of their experiences, and how they defined the ideas of mutual benefit and reciprocity in community-university partnerships. The

chapter provided the necessary context as to why a qualitative study, and specifically a phenomenological study, was suited for the research questions posed; it also examined the role of the researcher and her interest, epistemology, and positionality in relation to the research study. A large section was devoted to explaining the research site selection and why The University of Texas at Austin provided an understandable area of study given its historical and current background. Finally, the chapter explained data analysis using Creswell's (2013) abridged version of Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach through the use of coding, clustering of meaning units to create codes, and validation and evaluation strategies espoused by Creswell.

Chapter 4: Questionnaire and Profiles

As a mechanism to provide a general overview of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement's (DDCE) community partners, this study used a questionnaire. Not only was this to ascertain particulars about relationships, communication, and perspectives on community engagement through their interaction with DDCE, but the questionnaire also provided a sample through which potential interview participants were discovered. As a result, this chapter will delve into the questionnaire and its results. The chapter will present descriptive analysis of the data as well as their connection to the conceptual framework and the relevant connections therein. In addition, this chapter will cull out the data of those participants who also participated in the phenomenological portion of the study. By doing so, this provides an opportunity to show the similarities and differences, as well as the diversity, within the qualitative sample group. This will lead to an introduction to the interview participants whose stories will be expanded on through vignettes in the latter half of the chapter.

Compilation of Partnership Inventory

In order to canvas as many community partners as possible–since the DDCE has over 400 community partners–the first step was to compile an inventory of current partners and contact information for either the community partner or more specifically the community agent. In connection with a work assignment, I reached out to all relevant areas within DDCE to create an inventory of all current community partners. For the inventory, each area was asked to use an Excel chart prepopulated with the headers of:

partnership, contact person, email, and phone. I then compiled these Excel sheets into one main sheet with the additional header of DDCE affiliation.

Ten community partners have relationships with more than one area within the division. In addition, nine people were also listed as the contact person for more than one organization. As a result, after removing partnerships that did not include contact information, specifically an email (57 partnerships), the second step was to remove duplicate contact emails for people who represented either the same organization or more than one organization. If an email was provided but not a contact name, the questionnaire was still sent out. Moreover, if an organization had more than one contact person, all the people were contacted. Overall, an initial email invitation to participate in the dissertation questionnaire was sent to 334 different community partners.

Dissemination of Questionnaire

The questionnaire, conducted through Qualtrics (see chapter 3 for more information), was introduced via email to the 334 contact people provided through the community partner inventory on October 18, 2016. Any emails that bounced back were removed from the inventory list because of undeliverable or invalid emails. That reduced the number of reachable contacts to 313. In addition, all potential participants were provided the option of having their email removed from the distribution list by replying back to the email sent. Twenty people asked to be removed from the list for various reasons, including but not limited to: disinterest; lack of time; finding the study irrelevant to their work; or, in the case of one school district, needing IRB approval for contacting

any of their employees. If an automatic email came through that provided different contact information, an introductory email was sent there as well. The final email reminder was sent out on January 17, 2017.

Some community partners contacted me to indicate that they felt that the community partner classification did not apply to them. Given that the scope of this study is to understand the experiences and perceptions of community partners, I explained which area within DDCE had provided me with their contact information and requested that they look at the questionnaire to see if they felt they could answer the questions based on their experiences. This issue arose often with community partnerships that were formed with other higher education institutions.

Questionnaire Participation

Overall, 63 participants completed the questionnaire in its entirety. The questionnaire was accessed and partially completed by 110 people. Based on the initial list of valid emails of 313, the participation rate using all complete questionnaires is 20.1% for this study. The questionnaire was accessed by 35.1% of email recipients. Given that all questions were voluntary–except for providing contact information if the participant marked their willingness to participate in the interview section–76 participants completed more than half of the questionnaire.

Descriptive Analysis: All Participants

In the following section, the data from the questionnaire will be presented. Where applicable, frequency distribution and cross tabulations will be used to indicate

relationships between the questions. In addition, as all questions, except for those dealing with demographic information and interest in the interview section of the study, relate to the conceptual framework, those elements will be highlighted where relevant.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The first few questions of the questionnaire provide a context for understanding the type, scope, and location of the community partnerships. The following sections will expand on data points in organizational type, organizational focus, and location of the partnership.

Organizational Type

Participants could choose more than one option in describing the organization they represent. An 'other' category was also provided, which six (6) participants took advantage of to further describe their organization. Table 4.1 provides a breakdown of the types of organizations represented within the data. The majority of community partners (68.1%) indicated that they were a non-profit organization. Four (4) of the participants also classified their non-profit organization as a school or educational entity. Most participants, however, chose one organizational descriptor. As for the other category, participants included descriptions such as: media, ad hoc committee, individual citizen, and professional association.

Table 4.1

Organizational Types Represented by Questionnaire Participants

Organizational Types	Number	Percentage
Non-profit organization	49	68.1%
School or educational entity	13	18.1%
Business or for-profit organization	6	8.3%
Health or medical organization	1	1.4%
Governmental entity	6	8.3%
Social service agency	3	4.2%
Other	6	8.3%

Note. Participants had the option to choose more than one category for organizational type; 10 participants chose more than one category.

Organizational Focus

To understand the organizations without asking outright what the name of the organization is, organization focus provides another opportunity of understanding what areas DDCE interacts with in the community. As with organizational type, participants could choose more than one option. Table 4.2 shows the focus areas of the various community partnerships. Education (54.8%) and under-served communities (46.6%) were the highest chosen options. Thirty-four participants chose only one focus area; whereas, 39 participants chose at least two focus areas. Of the 73 participants who answered this question, 25 of them indicated a different category through the other option. Table 4.3 provides some examples of those descriptors.

Table 4.2

Organizational Focus Areas Represented by Questionnaire Participants

Organizational Focus	Number	Percentage
Education	40	54.8%
Community issues	27	37%
Policies	8	11%
Young children or adults	23	31.5%
Under-served communities	34	46.6%
Other	25	34.2%

Note. Participants had the option to choose more than one category for organizational focus; 39 participants chose more than one category.

Table 4.3

Organizational Focus Areas Described through Other Category by Questionnaire Participants

Other: Organizational Focus Areas	
Research	Counseling
Faith-based	Domestic Violence or Sexual Assault
Philanthropy	Mental Health
Female or Women	Senior Citizens
Media or Arts	Homeless
Business or Economic Development	Disabilities

Note. This is not an exhaustive list of all 25 focus areas described through the other option.

Location of Partnerships

Of the 73 respondents, 55 partnerships are located in Austin, Texas. This is also true for the respondents themselves as no respondent who lives outside of Austin represents a partnership located within the city.

Engagement, Agreement, and Satisfaction

Given that the conceptual framework looks at elements of relationships and perspectives within the framework of mutually beneficial partnerships, these questions

examine the level and experience of engagement that the participants self-identify for themselves as well as the organizations they represent. Moreover, to show perspectives about experiences with DDCE and the university, groupings of items using 5-point Likert scale are asked of each respondent.

Participant's Engagement Experiences

The questionnaire includes two questions about the participants' length of involvement in community engagement in general and about engagement or partnership with DDCE specifically. Table 4.4 provides a cross tabulation of both engagement types to see whether those who have been involved in community engagement in general have had longer partnerships or engagements with DDCE. While there appear to be two outliers who indicated that they have participated for more than five (5) years with the DDCE, they selected that their activity in community engagement in general is either 1-2 years or 2-3 years long. This could be because how they define their involvement with DDCE is not necessarily through the parameters of community engagement. Most of the participants (n=56) specify that they have been participating in community engagement activities for more than five (5) years, and of those 56 participants, 20 have the same timeframe in terms of their involvement with DDCE specifically. While most participants seem to be grouped towards the 5+ years of community engagement participation in general, when it comes to engagement with DDCE, there appears to be two groupings: 26 people with 0-2 years and 29 people with 4-5+ years of engagement. These differing levels of participation with DDCE is relevant to this study because their responses provide a better representation of DDCE's community partners.

Organization's Engagement Experiences

An overwhelming portion of community partners with the DDCE have been involved in community engagement for five years or more (n= 61). Of those 61, almost half (29) have been partnered with DDCE for the same amount of time. Table 4.5 presents a cross tabulation of the level of engagement with DDCE by the level of involvement in community engagement in general. The DDCE appears to have two major groups of organizations who are either newly established, 26 partnerships spanning 0-2 years, or are well established, 29 partnerships lasting five or more years.

Table 4.4

Cross Tabulation of Participant's Engagement Lengths in Community Engagement and with DDCE

Participation in Community Engagement	Length of Engagement or Partnership with DDCE						
	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years	5+ years	Totals
0-1 years	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
1-2 years	0	3	0	0	0	1	4
2-3 years	0	1	3	0	0	1	5
3-4 years	1	1	0	1	1	0	3
4-5 years	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
5+ years	8	9	4	6	6	20	56
Totals	(10)	(16)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(22)	(73)

Engagement Levels for Organizations and Participants

Questionnaire respondents ranked the level of engagement for themselves and their respective organizations. Using a Likert scale response, most individuals and organizations describe their engagement level as average or high engagement. While this information is beneficial in understanding the respondents and organizations, the results

might not show the perspectives and experiences of those partners who have less engagement either with DDCE or in community engagement in general since this questionnaire was voluntary. Table 4.6 presents the levels of engagements per the respondents' self-selections.

Table 4.5

Cross Tabulation of Organization's Engagement Lengths in Community Engagement and with DDCE

Participation in Community Engagement	Length of Engagement or Partnership with DDCE						
	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years	5+ years	Totals
0-1 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-2 years	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
2-3 years	2	1	2	0	0	0	5
3-4 years	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
4-5 years	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
5+ years	11	9	5	2	5	29	61
Totals	(14)	(12)	(7)	(5)	(5)	(29)	(72)

Table 4.6

Participant and Organization Engagement Levels in Community Engagement

	Participant Engagement Level		Organization Engagement Level	
Level of Engagement	n	%	n	%
No engagement	3	4.1%	1	1.4%
Minimally engaged	4	5.5%	4	5.6%
Average engagement	16	21.9%	17	23.9%
Highly engaged	50	68.5%	49	69%
Total	73	100%	71	100%

Note. All questions are voluntary, which explains the discrepancy between total responses for participant and organization

Engagement with Higher Education

To better understand if the responding organizations have only engaged with the University of Texas at Austin through the DDCE, the questionnaire included a question about whether this is the only partnership the organization has with a higher education institution. In the interview portion of the study, this question is expanded on by asking for specific institutions, especially those within the Austin area. For the questionnaire, of the 70 responses to this question, 80% (n=56) indicated that this was not the only partnership they have with a college or university; while 14 responses revealed that it was the only partnership. Of those 14 respondents, however, there is no statistically significant relationship between having this one partnership and the length of involvement in community engagement (p-value = 0.18).

Agreement about Elements of Engagement with DDCE and UT Austin

This grouping of questions included a scale of six items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 5 (*strongly agree).* The purpose of the set of items is to highlight the participants' perspectives on DDCE and UT, be they positive or negative. Greater variation among the items can indicate an area that needs to be addressed by the institution and the Division. Although one participant chose strong disagreement on all the items within the questions, he, unfortunately, did not agree to be part of the interview section of the study. Nonetheless, Table 4.7 provides the averages, standard deviations, and variances of the responses. If the purpose of a partnership with DDCE is to allow a greater connection with the university as a whole, then the lower average of 3.77 for that item reflects a potential area of improvement. Although

participants indicate positive agreement about the benefit of their experiences with both the university and the Division, there could be a potential disconnect between the two entities in the perspective of the community partners. Moreover, the two items with the highest variance, 1.02 and 1.04, highlight a discord between the community partners as a whole. While the mean for having a direct contact at DDCE to connect with is high, at 4.20, the variance of 1.02 and standard deviation of 1.01, point to that 17.1% of respondents answered strongly disagree to neutral on this item. A related item, having DDCE staff attuned to organizational needs of the partners, also has 17.1% of respondents indicating a strong disagreement to neutral stance on this point. These two elements are further addressed within the communication questions posed in the questionnaire.

Table 4.7

Level of Agreement Reported by Participants

	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
The DDCE provides useful/necessary resources for my organization	4.03	0.94	0.88
I have a direct contact at DDCE whom I can contact when I need	4.20	1.01	1.02
Through my partnership, I have a better connection with the University as a whole	3.77	0.94	0.89
My experience with the Division has been beneficial to my organization	4.24	0.96	0.93
My experience with the University has been beneficial to my organization	4.20	0.87	0.76
DDCE staff are attuned to my organization's need and purpose	4.01	1.02	1.04

Satisfaction of Interactions with DDCE and UT Austin

This grouping of questions included a scale of six items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly dissatisfied)* to 5 (*strongly satisfied)*. Three of the questions pertain to DDCE, while the other two questions ask about the university. This helps to distinguish the entity of DDCE within the university structure as well as to see how perceptions of the two are similar or dissimilar. Table 4.8 provides a description of this data. While, on average, there appears to be satisfaction with these elements of community engagement, the variance of the last three points indicate areas that need to be addressed or improved from the perspective of community partners. Most significant for this study on mutual benefit is the differing perspectives on co-creation and the access to resources, be they through in-kind support, expert participation, research, or student volunteers. Even though the scope of the items is different, the two that are specific to UT Austin have some of the lower means. In terms of highest satisfaction within this grouping of items, 60 people out of the 70 who responded to this question indicated satisfaction or strong satisfaction with the level of communication with a DDCE employee.

Table 4.8

Level of Satisfaction Reported by Participants

	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
Interactions with DDCE as a whole	4.1	0.81	0.66
Communication with a DDCE employee	4.26	0.77	0.59
Co-creation of programs or initiatives with DDCE	3.83	1.04	1.08
Input from University professors/researchers/ scholars	3.66	0.91	0.83
Access to resources from the University	3.86	0.96	0.92

Communication

In the research and literature about community engagement, communication is consistently brought up as an important element for both sides of a community engagement partnership. In this questionnaire, the questions that posit direct and indirect connections to communication show how the responding community partners perceive the opportunities and inhibitors to their communication with the Division.

Interactions with DDCE

Respondents were asked to select how the majority of their interactions occur with DDCE staff. Out of the 72 responses, 65.3% chose email or phone as the most common way of connecting with a DDCE staffer. The second most common response (11.1%) was a tie between: face-to-face visits and no interaction. This latter point is one where more needs to be understood, so that community partners have a viable way of reaching someone from the university side of the partnership.

Contacts with and from DDCE

Two interrelated questions asked the respondents to denote how many times they have been in contact with a DDCE staff member in the last year and how many times a DDCE staff member has been in contact with them in the same timeframe. Using a cross tabulation, there appears to be a statistically significant correlation between the number of contact times with and from DDCE; this cross tabulation produced a p-value of 0.00. Thus, as the level of contact from DDCE to a community partner increased, so too did the level of contact from the partner to DDCE, and vice versa. Table 4.9 shows the cross tabulation. A future implication from these findings is to ascertain why those 15% of

respondents never contacted or were contacted by a DDCE staff member during a given year.

Table 4.9

Cross Tabulation of Contact Levels from DDCE Staff and from Community Partner

	Contact Times with DDCE Staff Member					
Contact Times from DDCE Staff Member	Never	Once	2-3 times	4-5 times	6+ times	Totals
Never	9	0	1	1	0	11
Once	2	1	4	0	0	7
2-3 times	0	1	14	3	2	20
4-5 times	0	0	0	8	3	11
6+ times	0	1	0	2	20	23
Totals	(11)	(3)	(19)	(14)	(25)	(72)

Participants' Perspectives

To provide an opportunity for displaying participants' perspectives on their relationships with DDCE and the university, on their creation of programs with DDCE, and on how they believe the university and DDCE are listening to them, another grouping of six items using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 5 (*strongly agree)* was presented. Of all the groupings within the questionnaire, this one connects most to the overall research questions of the study, especially in connection with reciprocity, mutual benefit, and how the community partners perceive their connections through community engagement. Table 4.10 shows the six items and the mean, standard deviation, and variance of the responses. The lowest average (3.63) of this grouping relates to whether the respondents believe that their organization is an authentic co-creator in initiatives or programs with DDCE; this item also has the greatest variance

(1.20) of any other question asked using a Likert scale on the questionnaire. The neutral option was selected most by the respondents out of the five options provided. The other item with a high variation is on whether the respondents' perspectives have changed since starting the partnership with DDCE. There could be a number of interpretations about this item both from the respondents and for this study. The questionnaire fails to ask what their opinion was before beginning the partnership; therefore, there is no baseline to judge the improvement in perspective. Although most chose agree or strongly agree, for a combination of 60% of the responses, 32.9% chose the neutral option. As a next step, these respondents can provide more elucidation on their perspective towards the university.

Table 4.10

Level of Agreement Reported by Participants Based on Perspectives

	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
I believe that the University hears my organization's perspective	3.66	0.92	0.85
I believe that the DDCE hears my organization's perspective	4.01	0.92	0.84
I believe that my organization is an authentic co-creator in initiatives or programs with DDCE	3.63	1.10	1.20
I believe that my perspective on the University has improved since my organization started a partnership with DDCE	3.83	1.04	1.08
I believe that my partnerships with the DDCE has been mutually beneficial	4.04	0.89	0.80
I believe that my organization has a reciprocal relationship with the DDCE	3.84	0.90	0.82

Another grouping of question items included a mixture of a Likert scale, ranging from 1 *(Poor)* to 3 *(Excellent)*, and open-ended prompts if poor or average were selected.

These three questions went towards understanding how respondents perceived the performances of DDCE staff, DDCE in general, and UT overall. Table 4.11 combines all three questions to show the frequency of the choices of poor, average, and excellent. Over 55% of responses in each area indicate that the performance level is excellent. The perception of UT overall is the lowest (55.9%), and the performance by DDCE staff that respondents were directly in contact with had the highest approval with 69.1% deemed excellent. When prompted to explain their responses of poor or average, the reasons given encompassed a number of issues, but a few themes emerged. They include: lack of communication; need for more engagement at various levels; consistency to partnership; better connections to research; more effective programming and connections; increase in UT and DDCE presence in community; and increase outreach in Austin and beyond. These points were also made during the interviews that followed this survey (see Chapter 6).

Table 4.11

Participants' Perceptions on Performances of Staff, DDCE, and UT

	Poor		Average		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Level of performance by DDCE staff	4	5.9%	17	25%	47	69.1 %
Level of performance by DDCE overall	4	5.9%	22	32.4%	42	61.8 %
Level of performance by UT Austin overall	4	5.9%	26	38.2%	38	55.9 %

Units in DDCE

To understand which areas within DDCE respondents were connected to, question 20 provides a listing of all areas, including an 'other' option, so that respondents can indicate how their partnership connects to various areas in DDCE, if at all. Sixty-one people responded to this question. Of those, six used the other option to expand on the areas they selected, such as indicating a specific program or person within that area; pointing out a connection outside of the scope of DDCE, such as the School of Social Work or Texas Exes, the alumni network for the university; or as one respondent used the option to explain his lack of involvement with DDCE entirely. Table 4.12 shows the breakdown of DDCE areas noted as points of engagement. The bulk of responses (67.2%) centered in the Office of the Vice President and Community and External Relations. Unsurprising, this is where most of the partnerships are housed within the Division. While only one respondent indicated a connection with UIL, other areas were also chosen as part of the connections the respondent had with DDCE. Overall, 144 different options were chosen, which indicates that the 61 respondents chose two or more areas that represent their engagement with DDCE.

Table 4.12

Areas in DDCE Engaged by Respondents

DDCE Area	Number	Percentage
Office of the Vice President	24	39.3%
Community and External Relations	17	27.9%
Communications	5	8.2%
Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence	3	4.9%
Longhorn Center for Community Engagement	9	14.8%
Community Engagement Center	17	27.9%
The Project	2	3.3%
Longhorn Center for School Partnerships	8	13.1%
Office for Inclusion and Equity	6	9.8%
UIL	1	1.6%
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health	13	21.3%
Multicultural Engagement Center	7	11.5%
Gender and Sexuality Center	6	9.8%
Longhorn Campaign for Men of Color	4	6.6%
UT Elementary School	3	4.9%
UT-Outreach	8	13.1%
UT Charter Schools	3	4.9%
Services for Students with Disabilities	2	3.3%
Other (please specify):	6	9.8%
Total	144	

Note. Respondents had the option to choose more than one area, which accounts for the 144 total by 61 respondents.

Open-Ended Questions

Questions 21 through 25 provided an opportunity for the respondents to answer open-ended questions about how their involvement with DDCE was going; what they perceived as strengths and weaknesses of their partnership; and how both UT and DDCE could improve upon their community engagement efforts. For the purpose of this study, the responses were coded and are presented in Chapter 6 with the interviews.

Potential Interviewees

When asked whether they would be interested in participating in the interview section of the study, 36 respondents (58.1%) replied in the negative, and 26 respondents (41.9%) suggested interest in the interview portion. While 26 showed interest, one questionnaire participant did not provide contact information and, thus, was not contacted; six did not meet the requirements of being in Austin (questions 4 and 5) and having a connection with DDCE for two or more years (questions 7 and 9); but 19 met the criteria for the interview process.

Of those 19 potential interviewees, 13 were interviewed for the phenomenological study (see chapter 5); two never responded to the emails requesting an interview; and two dropped out because of scheduling conflicts. One set up an interview time but cancelled and never rescheduled, and one I had a conversation on the phone with, but after looking over the interview protocol I had sent her, she decided she would not be able to answer the questions fully for the purpose of the study. Therefore, from the questionnaire, I was able to connect with 13 out of the total 15 interviewees. While the remaining two interviewees did not complete the questionnaire, knowledge and connection with DDCE staff showed that their involvement with the Division met the required criteria for the study and thus indicated their interest for an interview via email.

Descriptive Analysis for Interview Participants

The following section provides descriptive analysis of relevant data findings of the 13 interviewees who completed the questionnaire. All participants indicated that they

lived in Austin: one participant had moved to New York recently but discussed her connection to a partnership based in Austin. During the interview process, each participant was provided with the opportunity to select a pseudonym. Some chose not to and asked me to choose one for them; others had specific names or phrases in mind that they wanted to be used. While potentially an insignificant part of highlighting participant voice, some participants used this as an outlet for creativity and personal reflection. In Table 4.13, some descriptors of the interviewees are presented, including the two interviewees who did not complete the survey. This table shows the diversity in the roles that the participants hold and the focus areas of their organizations. Some of the participants represent more than one partnership with DDCE, which accounts for the different types of organizations described.

Table 4.13

Interviewee Participants and Their Organizations

Pseudonym	Role	Organization Type	Organization Focus
Anne Hathaway	Vice President	Business or for-profit organization	Community issues
Beverly	CEO or President	Non-profit organization	Education, Community issues, Policies, Young children or adults, Under-served communities, arts and culture
Cartwright	Founding Executive Director	Non-profit organization, Business or for-profit organization, individual citizen	Young children or adults, Community Media
Diane*	CEO or President	Non-profit organization, Social service agency	Education, Community issues, Young children or adult, Under-served communities, Domestic Violence and abuse
Frank	CEO or President	Non-profit organization	Education, Community issues, Young children or adults
Katalina	Development Director	Non-profit organization	Community issues
Lee	Owner	Business or for-profit organization	Community issues, Under-served communities
Nathan	Community Liaison or Organizer	Non-profit organization, School or education entity	Education
Olivia	Manager	Governmental entity	Participants in the legal society
Peter*	CEO or President	Business of for-profit	Education, Community issues, Young children or adult, Under-served communities
Ricky	School Counselor	School or education entity	Education
Sara	Manager	Non-profit organization	Education, Young children or adults, Under-served communities, Philanthropy
Servant	Community Liaison or Organizer	Governmental entity	Education, Community issues, Policies, Young children or adults, Under-served communities, Race-Female-Equity-Safety-Quality of Life-Wellness-Poverty-Inclusion
Thomas	CEO or President	Non-profit organization	Education, Community issues, Policies, Young children or adults, Under-served communities
Urfreetodream	Community Liaison or Organizer	Non-profit organization	Young children or adults, Under-served communities

Note. *Peter and Diane were the two interviewees who did not complete the questionnaire. Only this demographic information is provided here, but no other part of the descriptive analysis in this section will include their responses.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT

While it was important for this study to have a spectrum of experiences in community engagement, it was still necessary to look at partnerships and the partners themselves as having at least two years of experience in community engagement, regardless of their specific partnership with DDCE. The majority of interview participants had five or more years of involvement as an individual in community engagement (76.9%) and with DDCE (61.5%). Table 4.14 shows the participation levels by each individual and by the organizations they represent.

Level of Engagement

While having participants who indicated low level of engagements would have expanded the scope of the study, all the interview participants classified both themselves and their organizations as average to highly engaged. The benefit of having such levels is that the participants were able to provide their lived experiences when it came to community engagement. Table 4.15 breaks down the level of engagement for the participant and the organization. More participants indicated that their own involvement in community engagement was greater than their organization's community engagement. In terms of engagement with other institutions of higher education, all except for one of the interviewees, including Diane and Peter, explained their engagement with other colleges and universities.

Table 4.14

Interview Participants' Individual and Organizational Involvement in Community Engagement and with DDCE, in Years

	Individual		Organization	
	Community Engagement	With DDCE	Community Engagement	With DDCE
Anne Hathaway	5+	5+	5+	5+
Beverly	5+	5+	3-4	3-4
Cartwright	5+	4-5	5+	2-3
Frank	5+	5+	3-4	3-4
Katalina	5+	5+	5+	5+
Lee	5+	5+	5+	4-5
Nathan	2-3	2-3	5+	5+
Olivia	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Ricky	1-2	1-2	5+	5+
Sara	5+	1-2	5+	5+
Servant	5+	5+	5+	3-4
Thomas	5+	5+	5+	5+
Urfreetodream	5+	5+	5+	2-3

Note. The time frames are within years.

Table 4.15

Interview Participant's Participant and Organization Engagement Levels in Community Engagement

	Participant Engagement Level		Organization Engagement Level	
Level of Engagement	n	%	n	%
No engagement	0	0%	0	0%
Minimally engaged	0	0%	0	0%
Average engagement	2	15.4%	4	30.8%
Highly engaged	11	84.6%	9	69.2%

Interview Participants' Perspectives

The various grouping questions in the questionnaire provided an initial look at the experiences and perspectives of the interview participants. Table 4.16 looks at the agreement that the interview participants had in terms of their interactions with DDCE

and UT. While, for the most part, the averages of the interview participants' responses are positive, the differentiation present in the choices is helpful in understanding how the participants view their experiences. The items within this grouping go to research questions about the participants' perception on mutual benefit and reciprocity. There is a marked difference between whether partners see their partnership as being mutually beneficial (M=4.31) or see their partnership as reciprocal (M=3.85). In fact, of this grouping, the item about a reciprocal relationship received the lowest average, albeit with one of the higher variances (.90). The second lowest average comes from the statement about the university's understanding of the organization's perspective (M=3.92). Though indirect, this statement shows whether participants perceive any reciprocity within their relationship with the institution as a whole and the DDCE specifically. As was seen with all the questionnaire participants, the interview participants also indicated a higher agreement with believing that the DDCE hears them (4.15) better than the university does (3.92). Another highly rated item within this group was on improvement of perspective about the university since starting a partnership with DDCE. All but three individuals either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement–the three others chose this as a neutral statement based on their experiences.

For the purpose of the study, the item about mutual benefit is significant. Although generally agreeable, three of the participants indicated being neutral on this topic. In addition, while the literature often connects mutual benefit and reciprocity within the same realm of community engagement, the participants were less favorable toward the statement about having a reciprocal relationship with DDCE (M=3.85) than

mutual benefit (M=4.31). The reciprocity item also has one of the highest variances (0.90) and the lowest average of this grouping.

Table 4.16

Interview Participants' Agreement on DDCE and UT Interactions

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Variance
I believe that the University hears my organization's perspective	0	4	6	3	3.92	0.53
I believe that the DDCE hears my organization's perspective	0	3	5	5	4.15	0.59
I believe that my organization is an authentic co-creator in initiatives or programs with DDCE	1	2	3	7	4.23	0.95
I believe that my perspective on the University has improved since my organization started a partnership with DDCE	0	3	3	7	4.31	0.67
I believe that my partnership with the DDCE has been mutually beneficial	0	3	3	7	4.31	0.67
I believe that my organization has a reciprocal relationship with the DDCE	1	4	4	4	3.85	0.90

Note. Strongly disagree was not included, since no participant chose that as an option

Another grouping of items pertained to the participants' satisfaction with both DDCE and UT as seen in Table 4.17. This section not only alludes to mutual benefit in

terms of their relationship but also their experiences overall. In this section, participants are likely to rate connections with the university at a lower average than their interactions with DDCE, though that is not consistent across the different matrix questions in the questionnaire. Three items of the grouping had one participant rate them as dissatisfied and neutral choices; this affected the variances of those statements to be closer to 1.0– they were about: co-creation of programs with DDCE; input from UT professors/researchers/scholars; and access to resources from the university. Most significant from that group is that participants were more neutral about input from the university than anything else in the entire grouping was. Interactions with DDCE as a whole and communication with a DDCE employee also had lower variances of .24 and .25, respectively, since all of the participants selected either satisfied or strongly satisfied.

Table 4.17

Interview Participants' Satisfaction with DDCE and UT

	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied	Mean	Variance
Interactions with DDCE as a whole	0	0	8	5	4.38	0.24
Communication with a DDCE employee	0	0	6	7	4.54	0.25
Co-creation of programs or initiatives with DDCE	1	2	3	7	4.23	0.95
Input from University professors/researchers/ scholars	1	5	2	5	3.85	1.05
Access to resources from the University	1	2	2	8	4.31	0.98

Note. Strongly dissatisfied was not included, since no participant chose that as an option

The questionnaire included another grouping of items to ascertain the participants' agreement, and thus, their perceptions. The greatest variance (0.83), and one of the lowest means (4.31), is participants' perception on whether the DDCE provides useful or necessary resources for their organization. Although seven out of the 13 chose strongly agree for this item, one disagreed and one was neutral on the issue; Table 4.18 depicts these statistics. This could be a point for further connection with partners to understand what resources they are or are not receiving and how to improve their perception of their interaction through resources. Resources can encompass more than one aspect for both the division and the participants. Overall, this grouping had collectively high averages with the lowest mean being 4.23 on the participants' agreement on whether their partnership with DDCE has led to better connection with the university as whole. All but one participant agreed or strongly agreed with this point.

Another matrix question included three items as well as open-ended questions based on whether the participant selected poor or average for each specific item. Table 4.19 presents the ratings for performances about staff, DDCE, and UT Austin. The two items about DDCE–one about staff and the other about the division overall–were both rated the same by the participants with 10 choosing excellent and three choosing average performance. This could allude to whether the participants perceive the DDCE based on their interactions with staff specifically or if this is only an indirect relationship. The one item about UT Austin's overall performance also had high ratings, though one participant

did indicate that the university has a poor level of performance. When prompted to explain what the participants would like either DDCE or UT to do better, a few of the

Table 4.18

Interview Participants' Agreement on Experience as a Community Partner

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Variance
The DDCE provides useful/necessary resources for my organization	1	1	4	7	4.31	0.83
I have a direct contact at DDCE whom I can contact when I need	1	0	3	9	4.54	0.71
Through my partnership, I have a better connection with the University as a whole	1	0	7	5	4.23	0.64
My experience with the division has been beneficial to my organization	0	2	4	7	4.38	0.54
My experience with the University has been beneficial to my organization	0	1	4	8	4.54	0.40
DDCE staff are attuned to my organization's need and purpose	0	1	7	5	4.31	0.37

Note. Strongly disagree was not included since no participant chose that as an option

points included: more relevant research; better engagement with the community and at different levels; larger presence by UT in primary education; less insularity by the university; more information about DDCE; and more support of grassroots efforts. Participants echoed and expanded on these points during the interviews.

Table 4.19

Participants' Perceptions on Performances of Staff, DDCE, and UT

	Poor		Average		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Level of performance by DDCE staff	0	0%	3	23.1%	10	76.9%
Level of performance by DDCE overall	0	0%	3	23.1%	10	76.9%
Level of performance by UT Austin overall	1	7.7%	3	23.1%	9	69.2%

Communication and Contacts

Though a certain limitation of this study would be that the people more likely to participate are those who have more contacts or connections with the DDCE and/or the university, when delineating the contact as the questionnaire does, there is evident variety in how much participants are interacting with DDCE staff directly or staff are contacting the community partners. These two questions wanted to show how much in a given year participants interact with DDCE. This also alludes to a matrix question item about whether the participant has a direct contact at the division. The data from the questions is found in Table 4.20. For both questions, 53.8% of participants indicated contacting a DDCE staff member six or more times a year and being contacted by a DDCE staff member six or more times. However, these questions do not distinguish whether these interactions were because of the same correspondence issue or not. A follow-up point would be to ascertain who initiates the communication–either DDCE or the community partner. When prompted to describe how the interaction occurred, most (69.2%) indicated that communication was through either email or phone. The one participant

who explained during the interview portion–but was not able to on the questionnaire–that the partnership has ended, suggested no interaction though did select that DDCE staff had contacted her two to three times and that she had contacted a staff member one time all within the last year.

Table 4.20

Interview Participants Contact with and by DDCE Staff

	Never	Once	2-3 times	4-5 times	6+ times
How often have you met or contacted a DDCE staff member?	0	1	2	3	7
How often has a DDCE staff member met or contacted you?	0	0	5	1	7

Within the division, other than three areas–UIL, Hogg, and Services for Students with Disabilities–all of the other areas of DDCE were represented by the relationships with these 13 participants. By far the most interaction was with the Office of the Vice President (10) and Community and External Relations (8).

Participant Profiles

In addition to the descriptive analysis from the questionnaires, this section will further describe the 15 participants in the interview portion of the study. Individuals have a unique trajectory towards community engagement and how they perceive the role and effect of it within their lives. The participants were chosen based on their and their organization's locality–Austin, Texas–and on length of participation in engagement. Although future studies should include newly established participants in community

engagement or in community-university partnerships, for the scope of this study, those who had more than a year of experience could potentially provide more information indicative of their lived experience with community engagement, mutual beneficial partnerships, and reciprocal relationships. Table 4.21 provides a quick overview of the participants' gender and racial or ethnic identity, which the participants provided during the interviews. Eight of the interview participants are men, and seven are women. Seven identified as African American or Black; two identified as Hispanic or Latino; one as Asian American; and five identified as White or Anglo, although two identified primarily as Jewish.

As this study is a phenomenological study, providing profiles of the participants before presenting the findings from the research questions underscores the lived experiences of the participants. This also provides a context of hearing participant voice within the phenomenon of community-university partnerships and the role of mutual benefit and reciprocity within that relationship. Although these profiles are a reflection of the researcher's understanding of each participant, the discourse includes a heavier focus on direct quotes from the participants to augment the researcher's voice. In addition, some of the participants' responses have been edited slightly for flow or to remove any potential identifiers. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to provide participants' profiles as a way to help frame the discussion about the themes found in Chapter 5.

Table 4.21

Interview Participants' Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Racial/Ethnic Identity
Anne Hathaway	Man	White or Anglo
Beverly	Woman	African American or Black
Cartwright	Woman	African American or Black
Diane	Woman	Asian American
Frank	Man	African American or Black
Katalina	Woman	Hispanic or Latino
Lee	Man	African American or Black
Nathan	Man	White or Anglo
Olivia	Woman	African American or Black
Peter	Man	Hispanic or Latino
Ricky	Man	White-Jewish
Sara	Woman	White-Jewish
Servant	Man	African American or Black
Thomas	Man	White or Anglo
Urfreetodream	Woman	African American or Black

ANNE HATHAWAY

Choosing the name of one of his favorite actors, Anne Hathaway brought a business perspective to the study. Anne Hathaway represents a local chamber of commerce, and his work there centers on increasing college enrollment numbers for the Austin area. Anne Hathaway is a UT Austin alumnus, having gone to the LBJ School for his graduate degree, and identifies as a White man. His 22 years in Austin have encompassed different organizations with 11 years at the chamber.

Community engagement work for Anne Hathaway is primarily through an economic development program that seeks to help the city. In addition, he explained that:

> The intent of what I was originally responsible for was to improve the direct college enrollment rate for Central Texas students. I created what I called a matriculation taskforce that had an education council which was a business only education council that was there to help drive our political policy objectives and our plan to increase college enrollment.

Anne Hathaway's partnerships with the university extend much farther than the community-university partnership he has with DDCE. For instance, through relationships with the Ray Marshall Center in the LBJ School, Anne Hathaway is able to collaborate on policy research, survey research, and tracking outcomes that all help to increase college attainment. Representing a local chamber, he has other community-university partnerships within the area, including one with the local community college.

His approach to community engagement is through "not a bilateral relationship. We really try and play all sides off of one another" in order to attain the organizational goal of increasing college attainment. Describing how that works through engagement in the K-12 field as well as what he would like to see happen with UT Austin, Anne Hathaway stated:

> We have taken the approach of: it's the whole school. We're holding principals and superintendents accountable for everybody there and however they as managers want to allocate that is fine…so, we're interested in systems and scaling and that is sort of the step that happens after you establish the piloting process.

The scalability and effectiveness of community work are important elements for Anne Hathaway. Although he described his frustrations with the focus on subsets of students instead of the whole group, Anne Hathaway explained that in order for real change to occur, the change must happen at the bureaucratic level:

> We put money into software design and we try and reduce barriers, but if you want to get a lot more kids into college without a value statement, you've got to

> affect the bureaucracy and it's hard. I mean, there are some things that we've worked on for 10 years. I have a scrap piece of paper from 10 years ago about the four things I want to do with the FAFSA form, and we've done two of them. And it's got coffee stains from multiple different years on it.

Anne Hathaway's goal through community engagement is to change the system from the top down. Not a simple task, but one that he explained is really the only way to accomplish real changes that can improve the college attainment numbers for Central Texas.

As a result, it all comes down to persistence for him: "I've been doing some of these things for 20 years. So you have to be persistent. Values driven and persistent."

BEVERLY

Beverly's experience in community engagement has spanned a number of different entities in Austin, specifically East Austin, and represented a program that the DDCE incubated for a span of two years in its Community Engagement Center. Although she had recently moved to New York at the time of the interview, Beverly had over 30 years–on and off–experience in Austin at various cultural and arts nonprofits. When I asked Beverly to share her social and cultural identities, she responded with: "I'm a woman, I'm Black, I'm lesbian, I'm a mom." Growing up in a historic community in Philadelphia, Beverly's experiences in that city helped her see what higher education institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University, were doing right and wrong in community engagement:

> I have seen the University of Pennsylvania seems to really work with and have a commitment to the community it sits in. Then, on the other hand is Temple University that sits within a historically Black and historically poor and working

> class neighborhood. Temple does not seem to have the history and legacy of sharing or inviting its community to participate.

This helped frame her expectations of what she wanted a partnership with The University of Texas at Austin to include.

Beverly first began engaging with the community through her work with an arts organization in Austin. She explained that it was through this organization that "I began to understand that there is a connection between arts and having vibrant communities. That all vibrant communities have art, and all non-vibrant communities don't have art. How art feeds a cultural sustainability or cultural creativity." This connection to the arts continues to this day and is why Beverly persists in enhancing the presence of Black culture and arts in the city. Working on a city-wide taskforce in 2005 led to the impetus for the organization she currently represents:

> It was an initiative between the City of Austin and members of the Black community to look out and figure out how to address disparities within the Black community in Austin. So, I was asked to lead a taskforce on arts, culture, and entertainment. We held a number of town hall meetings and focus groups. Out of that came a big report…and one of those recommendations was the development of a cultural district in Central/East Austin. That community was historically Black because of Jim Crow laws that were enacted in the 20s and 30s. That neighborhood is and was rapidly changing. The community wanted to make certain to acknowledge Central/East Austin as being historically Black because of segregation but being the heartbeat of Austin's Black community.

For Beverly, community organizing is what is needed to make change for any community. Her experience with UT has led Beverly to see that what the university touts as community engagement often ends up being "a one-way street." Further explaining her rationale for community organizing, Beverly explained that "what we as community

organizers have to offer the university is practical experiences around the theories that developed at the academy."

Although Beverly has had a long career in Austin, when I asked her about what she knew about the university and its surrounding communities when she first came to the city, she responded: "I didn't know anything about it until I was here for about 10 years. Because it was very difficult to find Black people. Of all the stories and things about Austin it never referred to Black people."

In addition, Beverly brought a unique perspective to this study as she represented an organization that no longer has an active community-university partnership with the DDCE. Speaking further about that experience, Beverly reflected about:

> How appreciative we are of the first couple of years that we wouldn't exist. I truly believe we wouldn't exist had we not been given that opportunity to have that space and to have access to all the other people in that space. So very appreciative. I am saddened that the relationship hadn't deepened and doesn't continue. I think that it would be beneficial to both the university and the community for the relationship to really deepen and there be a long-term collaborative plan put together. That would be my hope. I think that something like that could serve as a model for how small organizations can engage with larger institutions.

CARTWRIGHT

A UT Austin alumna, having received her undergraduate degree in the late 1970s, Cartwright described not only her connections and beliefs about the university but also the changes she has seen in the community, especially the East Austin community. Cartwright, an African American woman in her late 50s, pronounced herself as an "active retiree" with numerous "part-time hustles" that have kept her connected to her communities. Since Cartwright represents more than one partnership with the DDCE,

she discussed the different ways she interacts with the division and focused primarily on the local chapter of a national organization that focuses on helping youth and women. A significant portion of the non-profit is to "recognize African-American women in the community for their professions and also for their community work." As a result, this longevity with the university and the community has shaped how Cartwright sees engagement through the university for the common good of the community.

Cartwright was born overseas, since her father, a native Austinite, was in the military and moved their family to different parts of the United States and abroad. Yet, they always came back to East Austin, and that is where Cartwright started nursery school and came back and completed her secondary education. Cartwright said, "I'm an Austin girl. People like to say, you aren't a native, but the people know that I know the town. So anyway, I am an East Austin girl." Her ties to East Austin include attending her church, representing a non-profit organization, advocating work for local pools, working for a local community newspaper, and serving in the capacity of historian for East Austin.

For Cartwright, community engagement is "in the blood to get involved." Going back to her great-grandfather's time, Cartwright recounted the role that her family has played in helping their communities from the smallest to the largest of issues. More than any other of the participants, Cartwright's family background influenced much of what she sees in terms of the worth and purpose of community engagement. Her passion for this work was evident in every example and story she shared. When I asked her about how community engagement has affected her personally, Cartwright responded:

> What I get out of these involvements are beautiful relationships. Life is about relationships and being of service in the community, you build these relationships with people that are very positive and helpful. And so it doesn't just stop with your relationship with that organization and those individuals, it touches otherwise especially if the organization is helping folks from whatever aspect, it might be financial, it might be real food, and it might be with clothing, it might be with positive self esteem for that young person that the group helped. By them getting helped by the organization, it's like so, okay, they gave to me, and I need to give to others. It's a beautiful ripple effect. And that's what's been beautiful. It's rewarding for me to help. I got it from grandpa, dad, and my grandmother, mama's mother. Grandma was a Baptist minister's wife in Jamaica and she helped a lot of people. She would write letters for folks who were illiterate. She was a social welfare worker and a justice of the peace. She did a lot of community work before she began her career as a social welfare worker in Jamaica. My Mom held down the fort, being a good military wife and encouraged us with what we did. Also too, she fed a lot of different folks who just needed a meal and a listening ear. That was a service right there.

Those deep roots in her community also extend to her connection to the university. While she recognizes the difficulties that her classmates and she faced during the 1970s, and the issues that are still happening on campus today, Cartwright is pleased with the changes and actions that the university has taken to make it a more inclusive place for all students. For Cartwright, being an alumna:

> Has been a blessing. My receiving my education from UT has been a blessing. My journalism degree has helped me in all aspects of my career and my community….So, I like to give back to UT in different ways.

Higher education institutions are an important part of the community for Cartwright. Not only is Beverly an alumna and community partner with UT Austin, she also teaches courses at the community college and supports the local HBCU, where her grandparents, father, and uncle were alumni.

DIANE

Diane came to Austin to study at UT Austin and, like a few of her fellow participants, never left the city afterwards. As a result, she has been in Austin for 24 years working first in "the private sector and then moved over to nonprofit work. Loved it and now I'm still here." The change from the private sector into the nonprofit arena helped Diane see "that there's a whole other world out there." Diane identifies "as being Vietnamese American, and social, female, progressive, 40." Diane represents a local agency that deals with sexual assault and domestic violence.

Given the scope of the organization, Diane discussed the importance of intersectionality when working with communities:

> These days everybody's talking about intersectionality. We've been dealing with intersectionality for many, many years now before it got popular. I think again, our strength is we're able to meet clients where they are. They do not have to fit a model of program to receive services. We have the flexibility to make sure that our services are malleable enough that folks are able to easily access them and gain control over their own safety and well-being.

This flexibility of reaching people translated into Diane's view of community engagement work. Explaining that being a small organization has often limited what she can do when partnering with entities like the university, Diane conveyed the importance of non-profits standing up for themselves to make sure their voice is heard and is at the right table when decisions are being made.

Community engagement for Diane is not about a one way approach of reaching out to the community. Through advocacy, outreach, and education, the organization aims to help a subset of the community that often faces systemic barriers, including language barriers, to receive needed services. According to Diane, "we're definitely not a group

that will go into a community and tell somebody that what they understand about domestic violence is not valid. What we do is lay out what we feel are perhaps unhealthy behaviors."

When it comes to community-university partnerships, Diane emphasized how essential they are to making changes in the community. For her, having a university engage with its larger communities "provides a lot of engagement points for folks to do something beyond, beyond what they're prescribed to do." Through connections to a couple of different professors, Diane learned about the work of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and how a partnership between her organization and the DDCE would be helpful for everyone involved.

> I understood that it was a driving force in terms of inclusion on campus and that it was a place for–I guess it was a primary division that focused on not only diversity but also it was just supposed to be welcoming of new students and faculty and staff. Then looking at how everyone's personal narratives, whether it's ethnic or historical perspective or whatever, is involved in policy making at the University of Texas.

Although through the partnership the agency has gained benefits by engaging with DDCE and UT, Diane hopes to see more interaction and engagement in the future. Diane explained that reaching students and providing them with educational information are tasks that her agency does but not at a large scale level or in a sustained way.

Because of her connections to the university as an alumna and a community partner, I asked Diane whether her perceptions about the university have changed. Her response is indicative of understanding the scope of any organization for the overall goals or mission one might have:

> I think I've just had much more insular understanding as a student. You know, because we're just focusing on graduating and all that good stuff and you're not aware of how relationships are formed in order to make your life a little bit better. Outside of being a student, it's kind of the same issue that I deal with, with my own staff: it's like you do the work but then you must understand how your work fits into the bigger scheme of things with the agency. So I think that yes, my perspective has changed. I think in parallel, it's a matter of understanding how our work fits in the bigger picture.

The idea of fit also resonates for Diane in how she sees herself as an Austinite: "there's engaging underserved communities and then there's engaging the place that you live in. So, definitely I would find that for me personally, I feel that UT is a place that's accessible."

FRANK

Frank, "a 58 year old, Black American born and raised in the Midwest, in Chicago from the Southside," has had a long career in the Austin public educational system. After transitioning from public school to public higher education, Frank currently works at the university in collaborating with schools across the state to increase college enrollment. At the same time, he represents a local chapter of a national organization whose mission is to have African American men mentor young African American boys in the Austin area. Recounting his own childhood, Frank explained that "back in my day, we had–well I had my father–but we also had coaches and even other men in the neighborhood" who served as role models for young men. As a result, Frank explained the importance of having these opportunities for young Black men, especially as the images in the media depict Black people and Black men specifically in unflattering ways.

The philosophy behind the organization, as well as Frank's personal mission, is "taking care of our own." This perspective has followed Frank from his early teaching days in Chicago to this day:

> When I was in Chicago, I was a coach: I was a baseball and basketball coach. I taught algebra and pre-algebra, and I taught physical education. During the two years I did that, and even beforehand, I noticed that there wasn't a shortfall of African American men involved in athletics, serving as role models. It helped my life, it helped my friends growing up, and when I became a peer, I saw there wasn't a dearth of African American men involved in athletics. I also taught algebra and when I would go to workshops, I wouldn't see a lot African Americans in the academic world. So I made a conscious choice, I was 24 or so at the time, I might not looked like an academic, I had long hair and earrings and just I was pretty out there…[but] it made sense to me that: look, we need role models in realm.

In a city like Austin where the Black population has been migrating out towards the suburbs, making sure that an organization like Frank's is reaching out is paramount: "we are making inroads, and we are reporting out to the community that is what we are doing."

Working with this organization has validated Frank's professional and personal missions of helping improve the opportunities of young Black men:

> But just an opportunity to be with other Black men who are about something, who are trying to get back to the community at this point in my life. It is just a personal satisfaction in knowing that the blessings I have been given, I don't feel I have to do it alone now, and there are others who are trying to give back.

Frank provided a unique viewpoint to this study as he shared an insider's perspective of being closely affiliated with UT Austin and DDCE but also through his community work and long-standing in the community. In addition, Frank's organization is another one that is an incubator program for the DDCE. Being an incubator has helped sustain the

organization into its fifth year now and has given the organization the outlet to deal with issues regarding the disproportionality of incidents between law enforcement and young men of color.

In discussing mutually beneficial partnerships, Frank used his mentoring work as an example to depict what needs to be included in such a relationship:

> I mentor a 12 year old guy, but I get out of it as much as I hope I'm giving him. He's helping me see things like a 12-year-old seeing it right now, and I try to give him insights, but he teaches me things about technology and such. So it's mutually beneficial. I like going; he likes me coming still, and that's the nature of mentorship. Because it takes two to want to, and at the point where he doesn't want to, then it is over.

Although as an incubator, Frank does not see the full scope of reciprocity, yet within the partnership with the DDCE, he is optimistic of what is to come once the organization becomes fully independent in the next few years.

When the conversation moved toward personal skills and experiences that have helped him excel in community engagement, Frank recommended that it is important to:

> Stay strong to the course, to the goal, and to realize that everybody is not for what you are for. That goes back to leadership, staying the course, believing in what you believe in, and finding enough support to keep you going.

KATALINA

Katalina represents a number of strong partnerships with the division. Having recently transitioned to a long-standing partnership, Katalina was in the "honeymoon stage" of excitement about the opportunities and future connections that could be made through this partnership. Her enthusiasm and passion for the mission of the organization infused the conversation. Having always been passionate about giving young Latinas

better opportunities by attaining college degrees, Katalina recounted that her background and trajectory reinforced the work she does today. Born and raised in Corpus Christie to parents of Mexican American descent, Katalina came to Austin to study at the university. Speaking on her experiences as a first generation college student: "I was the first woman in my family to attain a college education. I'm very proud of that fact because I didn't have anybody. I just kind of paved the way myself, no one to help me through that."

Once she started at UT Austin, Katalina "immediately connected with higher education and saw firsthand there was just not enough representation back in the '80s. So I had very little role models in terms of faculty and staff, support, administrative and then of course peer students." Through a Hispanic student group, Katalina was able to find her community and discover ways to give back to her community.

After graduating and working for a while, Katalina moved out of the state for a great work opportunity but came back to Austin to raise her children. It was through her involvement with the Texas Exes Hispanic Alumni Network and work with a local Hispanic organization that Katalina was able to achieve her passion of working with young Latinas. In describing her recent transition to her new organization, Katalina explained that she:

> Was given an opportunity to work with Latinas in higher education through [this organization]. So along my career path and my life's journey, I'm a mother of three. Raising them, putting them through college is a priority, but I've always still maintained that sense of community as well.

Giving back to her community was a common thread throughout my conversation with Katalina. She was very excited to share the expansion plans for the organization that will

extend the mission and program throughout Central Texas, all of the state, and nationally as well.

As a UT Austin alumna, Katalina recounted how she first realized she wanted to go to the university:

> The first reference to this wonderful university that my uncle went to, and I remember thinking just by association, I could go there like where my uncle went, dream come true. But that was only in the back of my mind. Then this teacher puts together this trip. We go to Austin, this bus trip. I was 12 years old. We get down on campus. I remember to this day the feeling I had being on the grounds of the campus and looking up at the tower, and having this sense of comes an epiphany, like I will be going here. I'm going to make this happen. Don't know how. But I am going to be here. It was very profound….So I had those sights in my mind back at 12 years of age. And then just decided that's all I knew at the time. As I got older of course and as I became a student at UT I realized the history, the historical perspective of lack of minority representation.

Having an opportunity to work on this lack of representation even on the university's campus today aligns well with a passion that Katalina has had since she was a college student. Indeed, it is what led her to working with her current organization and a way to meld her personal mission through an organization that is housed within the university. Katalina's pride in the university is very strong, both as an alumnus and now through her affiliation with this organization. Although she realizes the university needs to do more, especially in making sure the campus is inclusive for all students, she explained:

> That was one of the proudest moments of my life other than having my three children on those three days, you never forget that moment, was graduating from UT for me. So having that ownership of being a graduate from that university and having an affiliation it educates people of influence, you know, movers and shakers. People who people admire and respect….So I take pride in representing UT every day.

LEE

Lee has been part of the Austin community for over 50 years. After serving in the army, Lee went back to his job with an insurance company in Lubbock but was transferred to Austin, where he has been ever since. Settling in East Austin "because that was traditionally where the African American community was," Lee opened his insurance agency that continued to serve the community for many years. In the 1970s, Lee started his community newspaper as way to ensure that the good news of the community was shared. Explaining his rationale for starting the newspaper, Lee recounted:

> When I came there was a paper here at the time. I used to get the paper and that's how we learned about Austin. I would get it every week; we had a paperboy, I think we paid a dime, or something, not a whole lot. He would come by every week and drop off the paper, but the lady who was the editor of that paper passed suddenly. At that point, we had a kind of void in the community. We felt the loss because we didn't have the communication going on. The paper was still there, and I and a couple of friends went over to the publisher and editor and asked if we could contribute. We would bring in the news and of what's going on in the community and so forth. We did it for a little while, but he really wasn't interested in the kinds of news we were bringing in….I worked with some other people and we talked about forming a new newspaper, but they dropped by the wayside, so I formed it myself.

It was through his newspaper that Lee began forming connections with the university. Lee hired graduates from the university to run the newspaper at the same time when "there were people in the community who have experience were coming out of the school."

The mission of the community newspaper continues to be what Lee set out to do more than 40 years ago:

> We still have the same situation we had then. It is getting out the good news about our community. In our community, we have people who have wedding anniversaries 50 years, 70 years old. People still get married and having kids. One thing we're proud of right now is for the last 30 years, we've sponsored a youth page in our paper, where we have kids in public schools, charter schools, who write for our paper.

The changes in the city of Austin have been reflected in the newspaper as well, especially through the youth program that Lee established.

> We depend on those kids. Actually after we integrated Austin, our kids were all over town. We had kids living on the north side of the street going to one school and little kids living on the south side going to another school. So, we had no idea what was going on with kids and schools. We came up with this idea and it was two-fold. First of all, it tried to give our students a look at journalism as a career option, that's one thing. We didn't require them to major in journalism; this was just an option to look at…but also we pay them. We pay them a small fee, which for a kid, that's good money.

The partnership that Lee has with the DDCE is primarily to support the work of the youth program in addition to serve as a conduit through which news from the university can be shared with the East Austin community. Speaking about his many community partnerships, Lee explained that: "what we do with our partnerships, we guarantee them space. If they got something to promote, just send it here, and we can get it out."

When I asked Lee about how he first became involved in community engagement, he recounted: "I got involved in community engagement back in college, really. I was in college during the height of the civil rights movement." Lee matriculated into college in 1956, the first year in which the University of Texas at Austin desegregated its undergraduate programs by law, although he was unable to attend UT Austin because of financial reasons. Lee attended an HBCU in Texas where he received a football scholarship. Community engagement for Lee is "just what I do;" it is ingrained in his

work without him having to think too much about it. In addition to his community partnership with the division, Lee also sits on the advisory committee. Serving in this capacity allows Lee "to advise the people, at least tell them what this community means to us and how we can work with them, but be a little sensitive of what's going on."

Given Lee's longevity in the East Austin community, he has witnessed firsthand and has been a part of the community as the university started to encroach on lands east of I-35.

> Now when the University of Texas first started buying up essentially East Austin, we had to go to them and say: hey, hold up, because they could take it all by eminent domain, really. What we did is we slowed them down, not that we stopped them. We organized the community to talk to them and said, look if you don't need all of the East Austin right now, just take what you need but don't be so greedy to take it all and have a whole vacant land in our community.

Lee is seeing a resurgence of these issues as gentrification continues to affect the East Austin community and as the university continues to expand eastward. Lee explains that "we realize that eventually the University will have the whole area but just don't take it all at once."

NATHAN

Nathan represents an alumni organization affiliated with the university. His father was a professor at UT Austin, and his mother completed her graduate degree at the university, so Nathan grew up on campus. Unsurprisingly, Nathan went to UT Austin for his undergraduate degree. He moved to Chicago to go to graduate school and stayed in Chicago for a number of years, working at different nonprofits. In 2011, Nathan came back to Austin to work at a nonprofit and moved to the alumni organization in 2014. It is

through the organization that Nathan has been able to connect his passions of diversity and to expand educational opportunities to underserved areas. Nathan identifies as a Caucasian man in his 30s.

Nathan first became involved in community engagement while he was in Chicago. Nathan explained it was:

> Primarily through research and looking into educational initiatives that sort of expanded the reach of programs I thought were valuable in the Chicago area….That's what lead me through the nonprofits in Chicago as well as the literacy programs when I came here to try and provide government resources on behalf of foreclosures [sufferers]. The job here is a little bit less serious…but my position in particular differs from a lot of the work of [the alumni organization], because I do work on behalf of many of our diversity initiatives as well as some of our student recruitment initiatives that are aimed at Black and Hispanic students. Those by necessity involved engaging partners in the community because those are constituents who are not at UT, coming to UT, and may never in fact have a relationship with the university. It is a lot of working with the general public.

As a result, in defining mutually beneficial partnerships within the context of his organization, Nathan stated that it should entail "figuring out what is the mission and value that the community's going for, and how do we help them towards that rather than just helping them towards our goal."

The mission of the organization that Nathan represents aligns well with his personal mission. Therefore, he sees the partnership with DDCE as a way to accomplish the mutually beneficial goals of both the alumni organization and the division:

> The goal that we always have is to engage the alumni, to connect into the university, to give them a tangible way to reconnect, and then also to champion the university's goals, to make sure the alumni are informed, educated about what the university is doing. If the university has more specific tangible effort going on, to try and get that word out, and to help facilitate that as best as we can. Particularly in a project with DDCE, mostly our goals have been alumni outreach

> and engagement. The populations that we are working with tend not to be as engaged with the university as the general alumni base as a whole are. When we work with DDCE, the goal is usually to increase the level of outreach that we have and to bring in community partnerships with usually unaffiliated groups.

In describing the community-university partnerships that the organization has, Nathan explained that "they have affected us in the sense that it is true community engagement not just in Austin but in communities outside has given our networks something to mobilize around." This has been especially helpful for the racial and ethnic groups in providing a more positive image of the university to underserved groups.

Nathan's personal mission is about expanding diversity efforts within a higher education setting. During his time as an undergraduate, Nathan recounted that the university was just starting to look at diversity in a concrete way and that the DDCE had not yet come into existence at the time of his graduation. Speaking about the university's past efforts, Nathan stated:

> I don't think I thought very much about the university diversity outreach efforts, because the university wasn't really putting anything out about what it was doing. In coming back, working with DDCE, I definitely gained a much greater appreciation for what the university is doing, for what the university is capable of doing. Especially with the wealth of community projects that [DDCE is] doing that have little to do with the university directly has really helped make the University of Texas seem like a more caring institution.

Nathan saw his work with the DDCE as a positive for his perspective but also the perspectives of the alumni he represented.

When I asked Nathan how being in community engagement and having a community-university partnership has potentially affected him personally, he replied that:

> It has definitely given me an outlet for combining two of my passions through the University of Texas and then diversity outreach. While my heart has always been

> my jobs before, it's definitely easier when you automatically share an affinity with the people you're working with. It's given me a unique combination of things that are special and meaningful in my life. Because I went to the University of Texas, it's made that degree and that experience feel more special, because now that I am a part of the initiatives that make me proud of this school that I went to. It enhances my own feelings about my time here at the university.

OLIVIA

Olivia is an elected official in the county government. Through her office, she partners with the DDCE on increasing access and understanding of the legal profession to high school students of color. Olivia has been in Austin for over 30 years; she came to the city in the early 1980s to attend law school. She has had different jobs in various sectors throughout the city from private firms to corporations and to the government. Olivia identifies as an African American female "over the age of 50."

Community engagement was something that was passed down to Olivia by her parents. Growing up in a military family, Olivia lived in many different places in the United States as well as abroad. Her parents "came from Louisiana, a very segregated state, and they deliberately I think decided to live outside of that state for opportunities for their children." Through the various opportunities Olivia had growing up, working with and for the community was an important part of life. She further explained that:

> Because of that I've always been involved in different [organizations]; I always do it through organizations. I'm an organization junkie. I'm not one of those people that does it by themselves. I have to have a group. And I think that, for me that's always been a way to make things happen.

Through community-university partnerships and community engagement in general, Olivia hopes to continue increasing the potential pool of applicants within her area to more people of color. Olivia feels that the law school preparation program she is

collaborating with DDCE on will be one such way to do so. As a tangential purpose of the program, Olivia rationalized that:

> When I have an opening and I send it out to the general public I probably don't get as many people of color as I think I should and so this gives me another pull to bringing people who probably either don't think they should apply or qualify to apply or thinking that they don't. But I always tell people get me your resume or get me your application and we're not just going to look at that. If it gets some people that probably normally wouldn't, that's what I want.

She hopes that the program continues to grow through more collaboration between her office, UT Austin, and the local HBCU, so that students of color are getting the resources they need to go to law school prepared.

Having gone to law school herself, Olivia recounted a similar program that could have assisted her preparation for law school, but because of financial difficulties, she was unable to attend. She believes that this issue is still common for many minority families. Indeed, in discussing the program between DDCE and her office she indicated that even though the program meets for a few weeks in the summer, there could be some justification for extending it more, but that raises the financial issue as well. In describing the program at another higher education institution, Olivia said:

> They had a minority program to prepare first generation students, which I was, because my parents aren't lawyers. I didn't know any lawyers, to understand how to prepare and read and test for law school. They did it during the summer. I mean, it was the whole summer. And as much as I thought, I knew that was a good idea, I couldn't afford it. My parents couldn't afford it. So I don't know how you do that, make it longer and not have it impact the people you're trying to help on economic problems. So that's what I think is a problem with making it longer.

Since the program is still only a few years old, Olivia hopes to connect with the DDCE staff member who oversees the program to provide more feedback and recommendations.

Having been in the Austin community for so many years, Olivia has seen many of the issues that affect the city and ways in which some of the problems can be remedied. Through her partnership with the DDCE, Olivia has a few recommendations for changes. She explained that even though the city tries not to be, it is still very much segregated. The DDCE, she believes, should "make sure that the communities are cross pollinating…I think DDCE can be a really good way for people to come together." In addition, when I asked Olivia what ways DDCE can continue to enhance and create community-university partnerships, she said:

> I think kind of what you're doing, I think there needs to be follow up or emails saying hey, we did this and what do you guys think or some kind of [feedback loop]… I just think we need a way to basically go back and say is this the best way to do it. Do we still need this? That's one thing I do like about the legislators. I don't like much about what they do, but I like their sunset process. They look at organizations every 10 years and say is there a better way to run it. Is there a better way for us to kind of reach out?…They review government organizations. I think you can apply that at almost every organization.

PETER

Peter, a proud UT Austin alumnus, represents a local chamber of commerce. Having come to Austin from a small town with "more cattle than people," attending The University of Texas at Austin on a full scholarship was an eye-opening experience for Peter. After graduating with honors and going to Wall Street to start his banking career, Peter came back to Austin briefly before heading to Houston and the financial crisis of 2007. His return to Austin resulted from the effect of the crisis and a shift in Peter's perspective. Recounting the turning point towards community engagement, Peter expressed:

> New Year's Eve 2007, I was a senior executive at a bank, one step away from my dream at that time, which was to run a bank, and so I was number two. And then we learned this New Year's Eve that we were shuttering down along with so many others. And so I was devastated, but took the initiative to close down the branch and the bank in Houston, and I realized that I needed to–I had a soul-search–that I needed to pivot from the banking industry. I didn't know what I was going to do. And I didn't have a rainy-day fund, which after–you know, it's just something that was not inherited or something that we talked about, but I should've known better, being at Wall Street, being paid well. And so I realized that I needed to do something during that transition. And so that's really what geared up and ramped up my community engagement.

Through the different volunteer work that Peter did in Houston, which led him to being awarded a significant community service award, he eventually started at a chamber of commerce in Houston.

His transition to the Austin chamber happened in 2014. Peter's passion for the chamber and the work it does is infectious given his enthusiasm and deep-set belief in the good that an organization such as this can accomplish. Immediately after Peter began at the organization, he explained the necessity of partnering with the local institutions of higher education as a means to create change. Peter said:

> I knew coming here that one of the most important partnerships that I could have in transforming the chamber along with the board and the staff was to plug into our community college and university partnerships. For me, those are pillars of the community. Leadership is going to change. There's going to be turnover in faculty. But…those institutions will remain and will endure the test of time.

In addition, the student element is an important part of the chamber's mission. Speaking about the organization, Peter stated: "we feel, from a workforce development positioning, that the chamber has to be a central leader, a focal point of those conversations" around creating various opportunities for students.

As a result, Peter finds community-university partnerships necessary as well as mutually beneficial and reciprocal when it comes to working in the community. Finding the right partners, however, is an important consideration for Peter: "I think it depends on scale, but you have to define the partners. What is equitable exchange and serving a common good" mean to each partner. The concept of fit needs to be considered by both sides of a potential partnership, so that the goals and missions are complimentary. Peter discussed another partnership he has with DDCE, the citywide My Brother's Keeper initiative, as an example of a well-structured partnership:

> What a beautiful example…we have an advocacy mission to support young boys and young men of color and young girls and young women of color. So the My Brother's Keeper initiative to raise the prosperity levels of young boys and men of color fits squarely within our mission.

Peter also explained that stewardship and understanding the common good are necessary elements in community-university partnerships: "I think stewardship is highly valuable, not just to check in once or twice but at least once a quarter." By "partnering with a purpose," Peter rationalized that the common good can be achieved since "it all comes back to respecting human beings." As a result, by working with higher education institutions, "we felt it was absolutely essential for diversity and inclusion, economic development, workforce development, and really messaging to the community."

Peter believes it is important "to be real and authentic" when it comes to community engagement. Being honest in terms of resources, abilities, and benefits is essential to creating partnerships that can be sustained and worthwhile for both parties.

When I asked Peter what he has gained personally from being in a community-university partnership with his alma mater, he observed:

> It's affected me personally in an awesome way. I mean, it's just personal, but parts of it–that I came through this University without an academic household and the slogan truly applies to me: What starts here changes the world. I mean, I look at that campus and realize that I was a young man that didn't have mentorship, that my dorm had more people than my hometown. A lot of struggles on the front end, just not knowing my way but knowing that I belonged. And then coming back to be a leader, and for one of the most prolific partnerships that we have to be with the University of Texas, and I think there's a pride that is so real, and I've seen the chamber being lifted up from this partnership. I've seen myself as an alum being lifted up. I've seen myself as a nonprofit leader being lifted up, as a business leader being lifted up, and that's very, very significant… In some respects, the DDCE has invited me to be not only at their table but at other tables where decisions were being made, and that is very, very significant and I'm very grateful for it, and I'm very blessed for it.

RICKY

Ricky is a recent graduate of the university and represents an educational organization that he has been with for two years now and one that has an affiliation with UT Austin. Ricky identifies "as a man, as a Jewish person, as a queer person." Although Ricky has had only a few years in community engagement work, his work at a local high school serving as an advisor through the educational organization has taught him much. It has also expanded his enthusiasm for community engagement that began during high school and was cemented through his orientation work at UT Austin.

Still at the beginning of his career, Ricky knows that he wants to stay within the education field and help students attain college degrees. In describing his trajectory so far, including his degree in radio, television, and film, Ricky said:

> I've been in Austin for almost six years now…I'm still figuring out what to do with my life. I have an interest in education. When I was at UT, I was pretty

> heavily involved in the orientation advisor program and I loved it, and so that's kind of how I found out about this position… And so I'm still exploring how to do what I want to–do what I love and then also make some sort of impact. Because I realized that just getting involved in the film industry and making things wasn't exactly fulfilling to me on its own. So I'm still finding ways to probably combine those or something, but I'm currently exploring avenues in education.

It was during high school in the International Baccalaureate program that first steered Ricky into community work. The program "did a really good job of teaching us what an experience felt like and getting us accustomed to reaching out to different organizations." Once Ricky began at UT Austin, he searched for avenues to continue those experiences. It was not:

> Until I discovered the orientation advisor program, and I was like, well, this is a really cool opportunity to impact the trajectory of these students who are coming into college and may be scared and may not be sure if this is a good fit for them. And I really liked the idea of being a host and being a mentor and being able to like motivate students and kind of show them that like if we can do it, you can do it, too.

Working with incoming students led Ricky into the educational organization he now works at as an advisor in a low-income, first generation student-heavy high school.

Ricky's perspectives about his alma mater have changed as he has entered the field of community engagement. In discussing community-university partnerships, Ricky explained that he thinks they are "wonderful because the university has a lot of power and it has a lot of financial resources–at least a university like University of Texas." This new lens of seeing the university also expanded Ricky's understanding about how the university uses its financial resources: "I remember consistently hearing throughout college oh, they make so much money, they have all this money, and it's nice to know

that like they're very intentional about using it to give back to the community as well." In addition, Ricky described how reciprocity comes into play within such partnerships. Through a student focused framework, Ricky stated that by helping students in the community continue their education, "that's going to affect the community's participation in the university. Because if they have the resources to attend college, they're more likely to do so, and that's going to help the university eventually anyway." When I asked Ricky how being part of a community-university partnership has affected him, he replied:

> It's given me definitely a better perspective on ways that I could be involved in the future…and it's a lot more reassuring knowing that the university takes the time and the resources to make sure they're being responsible in the community.

Therefore, in describing his future plans within community engagement work, Ricky pondered how to combine working with students to increase college attainment at the same time as making sure that those who are often overlooked are given equitable opportunities. After discussing potential graduate programs, Ricky said:

> Because in orientation, one of the big things that I was trying to focus on was trying to look out for people who didn't feel like they fit in, and so I still–I'm trying to look out for the advisors who feel like they don't fit in and for the students who feel like they don't fit in. I think that's the thing I want to channel the most, aside from trying to learn better ways to motivate my students.

SARA

Sara, a double UT Austin alumna, represents a local nonprofit focused on ending poverty with a strong philanthropic arm. Sara came to Austin in 1997 to attend the university. Since then, she laughingly explained, "I left for one year and then I came back." When she was choosing where to go to college, Sara felt Austin was the best

place for her if she was going to stay in-state: "What attracts people here is a highly educated progressive place and everybody in Texas who doesn't want to be in Texas but still stays in Texas comes here." Sara identifies as Jewish, part of the LGBTQ community, and a parent. In tracing her work in the community, Sara explained that she has:

> Been engaged in organizing and community organizing since I was in high school. I've done it in various roles and capacities; I've done volunteer community organizing and I've run political campaigns and advocacy campaigns. I worked at city hall, so I've been involved in that effort for most of my life.

This engagement has continued in Sara's current work with the nonprofit organization.

While she was a graduate student, Sara saw the effect of community-university partnerships firsthand. Through research that helped nonprofits, Sara realized the benefit of sharing resources as well as the benefit of such partnerships for the overall good:

> When I was a grad student at the LBJ School, and we did our policy research projects, our PRPs, we would be hired by some nonprofit or programs that would want some further research into some specific issue. They would be there to drive what they wanted to get out of that, but we as students, we would be there doing all the work and learning so much in the meantime. Not only, just for ourselves the students, but for the university we were able to create papers and reports and interview people in the community and say: hey we're from the University of Texas, and that gave us clout, and they would give us information so that we could report that back to the nonprofit. It's not even just two way, mutually beneficial. I think in a lot of times it can bring benefit to anybody that touches an issue when we are able to learn more and report more and research more.

Sara reasoned that this exchange of resources was available because "the University of Texas has created and upholds a really great reputation. That's a benefit both to the students and community."

Sara's time in graduate school coincided with the planning phase of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. Sara told me, "I was there when it first got off the ground and I remember Dr. Vincent trying to figure out, what exactly we're going to do." Sara had an opportunity to take a seminar with Dr. Vincent, the vice president for diversity and community engagement, as a graduate student:

> I took a class with Dr. Vincent actually. He led this little–there were eight of us–tiny little research class on diversity and community engagement…we would read and talk about community engagement organizing. It was cool to be part of that because I think he was still shaping [the division]….We were the sounding board from a student perspective, and about what that could look like or what it did look like and how students were engaged in the community.

This early interaction helped shape Sara's perspective on the work of the division in the community today. Speaking further about Dr. Vincent, Sara stated, "he's been really involved and making sure that UT is at the table…or in all kinds of different programs and boards and everything across the community. I think that's the role an awesome institution should play."

Given Sara's strong connections to the university and the division, she recommended how to expand the partnership and justified why she would always continue engaging in community-university partnerships. Sara finds that partnering with the university helps not only the university and the community but also the students:

> I will always engage with people and I find great value in engaging with the university. Everywhere I've ever worked I've always, most places I've worked, almost all of my professional jobs I've reached into the university find interns, because I think it's the best place to get them. So I can't imagine I will ever not think of UT almost first for anything I would need, community organizing.

SERVANT

A lifelong native of Austin, Servant has held many different positions in the community. For Servant, his faith continues to be the guiding force within the work he does: "My identity starts with my faith, and my faith orientation is God and Christ in that journey…all of my other activities evolve from my faith identity and spiritual identity. I'm not a religious-oriented person; I'm a spiritual-oriented person." Through partnerships with the local government and law enforcement, Servant works to break down barriers by working with numerous community entities across the city: "it's about relationships." Servant identifies as a Black man and is a UT Austin alumnus twice over.

The issues of race and equity have always been important in Servant's trajectory. Taught by his parents that regardless of what people think about him or say about him, it is important to be a true and authentic person, Servant's philosophy is embodied even within the pseudonym he chose for this study. While Servant was deciding upon where to go for undergraduate, as an Austinite, he decided that he wanted to attend the school in his town. However, although he had the grades and the necessary achievements to attend, the lack of recruitment or even enthusiasm by the university to reach out to young Black students was troubling to Servant. He recounted during the interview:

> I said, I have to go to UT because I have to go to a place that doesn't want me. I have to go, because I'm going to run into that everywhere I go. I said, if I can't do it–I can't make it in my own hometown and other people are coming in, and I can't get through this, it's going to be something that I'm going to face. So that was my process even then for myself. So dealing with community and dealing with rejection by that community, it wasn't anything about me personally. I just–you know, something was not there.

Even though Servant received full scholarships from other private institutions in Texas and out of state, he realized the importance of facing the issues that he would always deal with in his own city.

Servant recognized long ago that community work would not be easy, but through his faith and philosophy, he realized that working with those who are different than oneself is still a necessary element of creating change. He elaborated:

> I've been working with that community agenda. So people who don't agree with me, who don't look like me, and who look like me….How do I deal with people with whom I'm uncomfortable or in disagreement without being disagreeable? So that's been my journey.

Understanding the different perspectives that people may bring to the table is an important consideration for Servant and the work he has done in the Austin community for a number of years. For Servant, it is all about respecting people; an important element in community engagement work.

Having started at the university in 1969 and continuing his partnerships to this day, Servant has seen the many changes that UT Austin has made in the years. Looking back, Servant "couldn't have imagined that my university, which was very conservative at the time I went there" would have a division like DDCE working on issues of diversity and equity. In discussing the changes to student admissions policies and the DDCE, Servant reasoned:

> I like the way the University has been working to go in the direction of looking at a holistic approach to deal with that….But I think with the talented folks, the way that program operates is so creative and so awesome. I would almost like to see…be able to have all the departments of the university involved in that program and have a sense of relationship to diversity and community engagement. I think it's very inclusive.

Having more people and groups involved in diversity and community engagement is not only a goal Servant would like to see happen on campus but also through the program he runs. Through the partnership, he wants to have people "who work across the university and who have a presence in this community, and we want them to get exposed to our diversity considerations here."

Speaking further about his program and how the partnership with the division is significant, Servant rationalized "that it all comes down to listening." Listening and working towards a common goal are how Servant sees the worth of community engagement. He said:

> [This program] to me, is not a political agenda. It's totally raw community engagement: community organizing and community engagement. If it ever becomes through my journey, I have to deal with things, I may one day say, okay, DDCE, what can you do for this level of community engagement? [I am] not relevant. [People] change. It's, underneath that…a community agenda.

THOMAS

A proud UT Austin alumnus, Thomas has worked in the Austin community and with the university for years to advance the work of his nonprofit leadership organization. Thomas' journey to Austin is a common one: "came to school in '82 and stayed like everybody else." He identifies as a Caucasian man and explained that "faith is a big thing for me, mostly in the Catholic faith. That's where I live and breathe. So again that grassroots mission that we have a responsibility for each other. [Also a] huge, huge Longhorn football fan." Moreover, Thomas reasoned that "because of that middle-class, Catholic kind of belief, I believe that service is really really critical."

Given the scope of the organization, Thomas believes in the importance of engaging with all the institutions of higher education in the area to increase access for students and for professional training. Thomas explained that "universities are providing quality sets of hands in industry professions that we really need to do it, as well as the bringing in the latest academic research. I think it's a perfect, perfect fit." Speaking further about community engagement and working with universities to advance goals, Thomas expounded that because of these partnerships:

> It has been able to allow us to do more with less. It is hard for us to fulfill full-time employments in nonprofits. When we can find community partners, it's a win-win for everybody. On the side of the universities, what I have found is engagement of the audiences and the students are looking for meaningful, important community work.

The student element in community engagement is important for Thomas as an alumnus but also as what he can see the public sector gaining from a skilled student population:

> We need to ensure that our student populations are getting real work in the community space. I worry that generations are getting so attracted to the entrepreneurial business space that the public sector space is getting left behind. I think that community public space, personally I believe, that's where real innovation occurs. I don't believe entrepreneur and private tech or start-up tech is innovation. Because you get a start and you can throw it away if it doesn't work. Innovation is working within existing systems to make those changes. That's what's harder, and the more we strengthen that muscle with everybody, the better off we are.

Working with higher education institutions to ensure that innovation aligns with the public sector will lead to better things for the community as a whole.

In addition to working with higher education institutions to create alignments and opportunities, Thomas explained that dialogue and community are elements that need to be better addressed going forward in community engagement. He is hoping that through

his partnership with the division, his organization can gain "tips, tricks and new ideas and new approaches on how to encourage dialogue." From a business perspective, Thomas wants to adapt the consumer perspective in community engagement to create consistency in messaging and dialogue. He rationalized that:

> The other thing I worry about in this space is the inconsistency of a community or a region to build a similar model of dialogue from a consumer perspective….I think we need to start figuring what muscle we want to consistently build, because the consumer looks at an iPhone and doesn't care the application that's on it, they know how to work. We don't have a consistent muscle. In some ways, I think institutions don't want it to be consistent muscle, which I think in a way, is deluding civic engagement, civic participation. We make it too hard, and we don't think of the consumer and how that happens.

To accomplish this goal as well as others that are relevant to the community, Thomas reminds that universities are still underutilized even in a city like Austin. In looking at community-university partnerships, Thomas said, "I think the key thing is always going to be leverage. People are underestimating the leverage opportunity" that comes from working with universities.

Community, for Thomas, is about creating a space that will lead to the common good. Throughout the interview, Thomas talked about the community space and why it is important to always put the community first in community engagement. Thomas defined community space as "the 'melting pot' of a democratic society where all individuals' truths and experiences are accepted and we explore the framework we, collectively, want to develop in our community." As a result, it is through collaborating with different entities in the community that Thomas sees innovation happening. Using the example of community partnerships that have led to further collaborations, Thomas stated, "I think

the convening conversations in themselves with different entities can lead to relationships that were never the intended from the first conversation." Overall, Thomas has seen a shift in how community engagement work has taken place in Austin and recognizes that more needs to be done:

> We've got to be thinking about more creative ways. The days of coming to a public meeting are over. We're only going to get the same advocates there. I'm not saying we can all go social media either; there's got to be a place for human interaction. But it's on the person's terms not mine. The church organization, the nights of the parents club at schools, where are you already going that I can get you for 10 to 15 minutes. That's what we have to do differently than 'thou shall come to me because it's convenient for me on Tuesday at 10:30.' That's just not going to happen anymore.

URFREETODREAM

Urfreetodream, a pseudonym that encompasses the philosophy that she has through her work and life, is a local Austinite with deep ties to the community and to a number of higher education institutions in the area. Speaking about Austin: "I was born in Austin. I've been here all my life. I've traveled and always come back, because I consider Austin a very safe place for me. I enjoy the people, the community. I will always call it home." For Urfreetodream, there are three passions in her life: "the foster system, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and education." Having the opportunity to work in any of those fields is always a welcomed prospect for her. Urfreetodream identifies as an African American woman.

Urfreetodream's childhood has greatly shaped how she sees the world and what contributions she wants to make to her community. Her nonprofit's mission is to help

foster care children experience events that are often denied to them. Urfreetodream recounted her own experiences:

> Because I grew up in foster system and there was never an opportunity, I mean I never had a birthday party. Never remember going swimming or to the park or to an amusement park, I was always left behind in stuff like that. I think the kids in the homes with their biological parents, they went but we never went. I felt why should a child grow up in this very basic experience and identity, because it's kind of this virtue you are. For me, missing those things made me work harder to appreciate them.

Meeting the basics needs of life is something that has spurred Urfreetodream to positively affect the life of foster care children. She explained that the educational system is an important partner in making this happen:

> A lot of kids age out [of the system] and don't have anywhere to go, end up on the streets. And you can't learn if you don't eat. Can't learn if you don't have a place to put your stuff. I believe that, as a community we have to realize the houses are not just to have; they're predominately to put our stuff in. And once you can lay your stuff down, you can think. If you're not carrying your stuff on your back we're considering where you going to sleep in the very next day, then you can think better. The key to education is having a place to live: somewhere to put your books down and study. You don't provide that very basic foundation, then everything else doesn't really matter.

As a result, Urfreetodream advocates for improving the welfare of foster youth through engaging with community entities.

However, she sees community engagement as that which is mutually beneficial and reciprocal. For Urfreetodream, considering the needs of both sides of a partnership is necessary in community work. She explained:

> When you go up to a community, 'ok, I'm here to improve your community,' so that means I am here to give you something and then the question that you have to answer is: how are you giving it to me?…I've been very proficient and explaining the question of how you are giving it to me and giving people the opportunity to

> engage with that question….That's the community outreach and community engagement part of what I do.

At the same time as making sure that both sides know what they can gain from a partnership, they also have to understand each other's goals. Urfreetodream said that "when you start talking about a relationship, you have to know that in that relationship you have to give but you have to know what the goal is."

Urfreetodream has found that partnering with higher education institutions is a viable way to affect change as well as "staying in the loop" since "there is an educational component in everything." She posited that: "the colleges and universities they touch everybody's lives." In addition, especially in a college town like Austin, Urfreetodream rationalized that:

> In order to engage a community, as a university - and everything around here spells UT–you don't have to say it, the visual part of it I was talking about, and you see burnt orange, you know it's UT….But you can't think it's out of reach, and colleges have to continue the strand of letting everyone know it's not out of reach. It may be out of your target at the moment because you have so much going on in your life, but it's not out of reach.

By partnering with universities like UT Austin, Urfreetodream explained that it often came down to outreach work between the two: "I think any outreach that they do is good for them. And any outreach I do is good for organizations. I have an obligation to talk about what they do and how they do it."

Chapter 5: Data Descriptors and Themes

This chapter presents the findings from the interview, follow-up emails, and open-ended questions from the questionnaire in order to highlight the lived experiences of community agents in community-university partnerships with the University of Texas at Austin through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. The three questions guiding this research built upon one another in a way to introduce not only what the participants perceive as mutual benefit and reciprocal relationships but also how those experiences have played out in the context of their community-university partnership. To reiterate, the research questions framing the study are as follows:

1. How do community agents define mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?
2. How do community agents, who represent community partners with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin, make meaning of their experiences in a community-university partnership?
3. How do community agents' experiences connect to their definition of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?

As such, this chapter is presented based on the research questions using the textural and structural descriptors found within each as well as a composite theme that presents the descriptors in a cohesive way. The textural describes 'what' participants experienced through the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013); whereas, the structural descriptions are "the 'how' that speaks to the conditions that illuminate the 'what' of experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Then by taking the textural and structural

descriptors and clustering them into a composite theme, this will lead to the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the chapter will conclude with a presentation of the core essence found in the phenomenon of community-university partnerships: belief and commitment in engagement for a larger good, even beyond the community-university partnership.

Research Question One: Definition of Mutual Benefit and Reciprocity

Throughout the communications with the participants, including the interviews themselves–other than providing a general definition of what community engagement, as defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is no exact definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity were provided. In this way, the participants had the opportunity to personally define mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocal relationships. As a result, their participation in community engagement led to their definitions of these two elements as well as their expectations from them. The textural theme for research question one of what the participants experienced can be described as: engagement leads to definitions. The context and experiences of the participants have shaped how they experience mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships. Unsurprisingly, a textbook definition of the relationship pales in front of real people's perceptions and involvements in community engagement. For the structural descriptor, the perceived successes and failures impacted the participants' experiences in community-university partnerships. This in turn allowed the participants to develop definitions for mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocal relationships beyond what

the literature describes. Regardless of how the participants defined or framed the two elements of mutual benefit and reciprocity, the interconnectedness of the two became most evident. Figure 5.1 provides the findings for research question one based on descriptors and themes. Therefore, in the following sections, the themes within *Engagement Leads to Definitions* and *Reflections on Successes and Failures* will provide a context to the composite theme of *Interconnectedness of Mutual Benefit and Reciprocity in Community-University Partnerships*.

Table 5.1

Research Question One Descriptors and Theme

	Textural Descriptor	**Structural Descriptor**
How do community agents define mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?	Engagement Leads to Definition	Reflections on Successes and Failures
Composite Theme	Interconnectedness of Mutual Benefit and Reciprocity in Community-University Partnerships	

ENGAGEMENT LEADS TO DEFINITIONS

The diversity of the participants in terms of their backgrounds, experiences, focus areas, and connections to the university played an integral part throughout the study. When it came time for participants to define mutual benefit and reciprocity within the framework of community-university partnerships, participants framed their definitions based on the scope and context of their work in community engagement. Hence, the participants' experiences in community engagement shaped their definition of mutual

benefit and reciprocity in community-university partnerships. It allowed the participants to better define community engagement as a whole and how their perspective affected their experiences in their community-university partnerships.

During the interview, the participants were told Carnegie Foundation (n.b.d) definition of community engagement–the "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (How is Community Engagement Defined section, para.1). Afterwards, they were asked to define mutually beneficial partnerships and then how reciprocity affects community-university partnerships. Although most were able to pinpoint some form of a definition, it was how they came about or described the definition that was telling.

Within the Scope of Experience

For a number of participants, how they saw both mutual benefit and reciprocity was through the lens of their organization, their focus area, or their understanding of what community engagement entails. Most of the participants have had years of experience in community engagement through this current community-university partnership or, often, even beyond it. Thus, the community agents recognized the concept of mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocal relationships more fully through what they have experienced in the past with other partnerships as well as what they are experiencing through this partnership. By describing examples of situations in which they had found themselves did the participants fully describe how and why they define mutual benefit and reciprocity in such a manner. Moreover, while many recognized that reciprocity

does play a role in community engagement, the idea was less clear to them than what mutual benefit was. Though some were not able to explicitly describe reciprocity, they did provide examples of mutual beneficial partnership that included elements of reciprocity without calling it as such. Indeed, they recognized the importance of acknowledging the role that both sides of the partnership play in terms of each side's resources, knowledge, and perspectives.

Mutual Benefit

For Diane, the importance of a mutually beneficial partnership was made apparent when people were not included or invited to the table to discuss important issues. Her definition also includes her deep felt emotion of why mutual beneficial partnerships are needed and what they should entail:

> When you have both parties truly and equally at the table, this is–you've touched on something that gets me really riled up. I think that it needs to involve true inclusion, that when you are partnering with communities or other way around, you hear all voices. The table needs to be big enough for everyone to be there. You have to have continual communication. I also think that it has to be sharing your resources, and resources don't necessarily need to be monetary. But it could be a balance of knowledge, money, time, people, energy, whatever it is. To be truly collaborative you have to set real expectations.

Diane also touched upon a well-recognized issue in community-university partnerships: the difference between equity and equality. While she proposed that all persons should have equal standing when it comes to the decision making or planning stage, she underscored that often collaborations arise when one group has a particular agenda in mind. As was seen with others, community agents perceived the term community

engagement in different contexts. For Diane, the collaboration element was stressed through her experiences within the community and through her role as an agency leader:

> I understand that a lot of times in collaborations, one particular group is trying to achieve a goal or perhaps meet a grant goal or some sort of initiative. So true collaboration sometimes doesn't quite pan out. It just depends on what are all of your tools and all of your resources that you bring to the table and what is the overall intent of it. But I think for the university with it's very large presence, that it would beneficial to make sure that there's multiple voices. Don't always invite the usual suspects. Make sure that you understand that, whether it's an agency or a community, there are varying voices in there and include those varying voices.

Like Diane, Ricky also defined mutual benefit through expectations from the university in addition to his organization's need. Ricky recommended that both sides first define their needs, the benefits they hope to gain, and then reach out to accomplish these goals. In describing the role of a higher education institution in mutually beneficial partnerships, Ricky explained that "if you're the university, reaching out to the community and seeing what is needed by the local nonprofit organizations, what is needed by the city government, and what can the university do to supplement those activities and resources."

Since experiences both past and present play an important role for community agents in recognizing mutual benefit and reciprocity, their definitions are also shaped through the different perspectives they may have within the community. Nathan, for instance, served in a unique role that closely connects him to the university as a community partner but also as a university partner to a larger community. Participating in community engagement, at least for this study's participants, included representing the university or the community based on how one looked at the participants' activities. In

fact, a number of participants described their experiences through the various roles they currently serve, which in turn affects how they define the scope of their community in a certain instance. Nathan explained mutual benefit in a way that also connects to the common definition of reciprocity in community engagement, that which highlights the respect and recognition of each of the partners in a community-university partnership. Nathan defined mutual beneficial partnerships through the perspective of how institutions engage with their communities. He saw them as partnerships:

> In which both sides find value. Thinking beyond that, [it] would be a partnership in which the goals of both sides are moved towards. It's a much more specific benefit than just both sides gain something. That requires both the institution having a vision and a goal that is articulated and then understanding the vision and goal of the partners within the community.

In the same vein, Thomas described mutually beneficial partnerships as those that lead to a greater benefit to the community that his organization serves. For Thomas, a partnership with a higher education was no "different than a normal convening or collaborating relationship we have with someone else. What the university brings that is different is that independent voice. Us working with them can provide a platform for the community to have some dialogue." Therefore, because of the experiences that many of the community agents have had in their current roles, while the University of Texas at Austin and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement might see them as a community partner, that description may not entirely cover how those partners see themselves within their own communities. This, in turn, affects how the participants in this study defined mutual benefit in community-university partnerships.

Sara, on the other hand, saw mutual benefit through community-university partnership when she was a graduate student at UT Austin. Through a policy research project that she conducted for a non-profit, Sara recognized that "it's not even just two way, [it's] mutually beneficial. I think in a lot of times it can bring benefit to anybody that touches an issue when we are able to learn more and report more and research more." Recognizing the benefits that she received as a student, that the university received from the partnership, and that the nonprofit gained solidified the role of community-university partnerships early on through her educational career.

Reciprocity

When asked to define or expand on reciprocity following the discussion on mutually beneficial partnerships, most participants used their experiences or expertise as illustrations to better describe the role and effect of reciprocity in community-university partnerships. Servant connected his experience as a social worker to how he sees reciprocity come into play within community engagement. He described it as a type of stewardship where "I need to understand how to best support and serve you." Throughout his interview, Servant portrayed the servant role that he feels embodies his work in the community within his professional and personal life. He went on to describe that reciprocity is the recognition that partners need to glean from one another in order for sustainable and effective work to occur. Peter, the CEO of a chamber of commerce, used an example about a chamber of commerce in a rural setting to indicate how reciprocity affects community engagement:

> Reciprocity is an equitable exchange of resources, knowledge, for a common good. What I mean by equitable resources is let's say that a chamber of commerce in a rural area was partnering with a Foundation out of Kansas City. Probably what the Foundation could give to that small chamber of commerce would be valued at a greater amount in terms of valuation than probably what the rural community could give back to the Foundation. I think there's some equity there, but maybe at first glance, it might seem like it was off balance in terms of the monetary investment coming into the small chamber of commerce and what the chamber of commerce was returning to the Foundation. So I think it's important to figure in scale – scale of resources, because ultimately, that rural community could be an ignition or a catalyst to jump-start other projects that mean so much.

As Peter indicated, reciprocity is not about an equitable exchange of currency but rather a recognition of resources or knowledge that can benefit the partners in a way that is helpful to each side.

Peter also alluded to the long-term benefits versus the short-term benefits that one side may see before the other partner finds value in the partnership. Frank echoed this sentiment in describing how he sees reciprocity playing into community-university partnerships by saying: "I don't know if initially it has to be something in it for both parties, but down the line, I would say when the relationship matures there should be some reciprocity, in terms of benefits for both." He also described that he would see reciprocity in the partnership once the incubator relationship with the Division ends: "It will prove and demonstrate that the university can partner with outside entities, help them mature, let them go and then hopefully we can flourish…once we are an independent organization that is where the reciprocity comes in." In addition, Olivia discussed the implications of reciprocity through the long-term expectations of creating an inventory

and connecting students through the partnership to areas that need new hires within her job scope in the future.

As with mutual benefit, community agents perceived reciprocity within the scope of their organization's needs and goals. For Thomas, reciprocity is understanding the lanes that each side brings to the partnership and not recreating the wheel, as it was. For Thomas' organization, "staying within the scope of our work is the best route we do. I will never ever ever build a data shop when I've got this much university potential and opportunity here. Why would I?" The recognition of what the university has to offer for his organization, as well as the Austin community in general, drives how Thomas sees not only the mutual benefit but also the reciprocity within community-university partnerships. Katalina also framed reciprocity in terms of her organization's mission and the university's role within that context:

> The way the world reciprocity is defined, you give something in return and they give something back. You reciprocate each other's efforts, right, activities, and gifts. So if we get so much from the university, what we can give them is for me it's a no brainer standpoint–a college educated young Latina individual going into their university, becoming one who's going to change the world.

Katalina's reference to the University of Texas at Austin's motto – what starts here changes the world- alludes to another point found within the study that having missions that align or fit is an important consideration for community partners.

Mission Leads to Definition

For some of the participants, their definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity were expressed through the lens of either their personal mission or their organization's mission. These participants saw the role of mutual benefit and reciprocity more defined

than just their participation in community engagement in general and through a personal or organizational perspective. For instance, Anne Hathaway showed his agreement with the Carnegie definition by saying: "I like that definition. I mean, ours is a business led effort, and there's no individual company who specifically benefits from a percentage of its kids directly enrolling in higher education." Anne further described how both mutual benefit and reciprocity are utilized by the organization to ensure that educational enrollments in higher education institutions are increased to benefit to the local economy. Urfreetodream also saw mutual benefit through the mission of her organization. She couched mutual beneficial partnerships within the context of longevity of mission and purpose:

> Where everyone has ownership and it has to be a fiber. Which means that when the president changes, the fiber doesn't change. Administration, yes it would change, but the fiber of what is supposed to happen there has to be threads that I recognize.

For her, it is about the sustainability of her organization; not even her continued participation is as important if ensuring that the goal and mission of her nonprofit are actualized through the community-university partnership. Peter also saw mutual beneficial partnerships its effect on his organization and DDCE. Peter, similar to Thomas, mentioned the need not to reinvent the wheel, especially given the resources and reach possible through community-university partnerships. The concept of collective impact particularly influenced how Peter sees mutually beneficial partnerships:

> I believe in the concept of collective impact, but I think people just use that word. It's so easy to use and it sounds so good, but what does that mean? It's partnering with a purpose. When I look at the relationship, with the DDCE, it's so full-bodied for us. We're helping promote their mission, their strategic pillars, their

> brand messaging. And they're helping us be mission-central and helping us investing in this organization. So partnering with a purpose has to advance both of our goals. When possible, to have outcomes attached to those goals. And then to also not reinvent the wheel.

As Peter explained, mutually beneficial partnerships need to take into consideration the resources and abilities of each partner, which in turn helps shape how the community partner sees reciprocity within the partnership.

Frank, whose personal mission of improving the quality of life for young men of color is also reflected in his work as president of his organization, found mutually beneficial partnership to be in line with what his organization needs. He also described mutually beneficial partnership through his perceptions about university needs: "mutual beneficial partnership means that there is something in it for both. It's just the true meaning of partnership. We, for example, there is a need for perception-changing for UT in terms of being men of color."

When it came to defining reciprocity, Beverly saw the need for acknowledgement by the partners as paramount importance. There needs to be "an acknowledgement of having received and then you reciprocate in kind or not in kind or however, but it is a certain acknowledgement." This was an important point for Beverly because this lack of a two-way street between her organization and the university is what ultimately led to the demise of the partnership. Although the partnership with the university ended, for Beverly, her idea of reciprocity coincides with her personal mission in community engagement, regardless if she is partnering with higher education institutions or not. According to Beverly, "I think of myself as a cultural worker. My work–no matter if it

was involved in dance or theater or–cultural preservation is all about how to connect arts and culture to community development." Working to promote these connections helped Beverly define how reciprocity should shape community engagement.

Definition of Community Engagement

While not a specific point in the initial interview protocol, it became apparent that community agents defined community engagement based on their experiences. Often they would use words such as: organizing, collaborating, civic engagement, volunteerism, and activism to describe their experiences within community engagement. As such, either during the follow-up emails or during the interviews themselves, the participants were asked their personal definition of community engagement. Sometimes the definitions were very complementary to what the participants spoke about during their interviews; for others, the terminology of community engagement did not fit their experience, perspective, or ideas of the topic. As with mutual benefit and reciprocity, the definition of community engagement was influenced by the participants' experiences and beliefs.

Two of the participants had less than positive definitions of community engagement. When Lee was asked as a follow-up to his interview about how he personally defined community engagement, he replied: "I do not have a definition for 'Community Engagement.' That is a term that is used by UT for the Department of Diversity, but I have never seen a definition from the department." While Lee described his extensive background in community engagement, as defined within this study per the Carnegie definition, he did not see the term community engagement as cohesive to his

experiences. Likewise, for Beverly, the term community engagement in relation with the university was not positive; as a result, she differentiated between community engagement and organization. According to Beverly:

> Engagement is like a one-way street. It's like, engaging someone by talking to someone. Organizing is about gaining community participation, active participation, around an issue or topic. Engagement is like being in a classroom and having a lecture. I'm engaging with you by telling you the information. Organizing is really about collaboration and how do you get groups of people together to collaborate on something. So it's not a one-way street. They think communication is–true communication is A-B-A: A says something to B, and B reflects it back to A. That's community organizing.

After providing this definition, I presented the Carnegie definition of community engagement to Beverly. She explained that her interactions with the University led her to see the term community engagement differently: "I couched it under the terms of community organizing, because my experience with community engagement mainly through UT has been that it is just a one-way street. That it is not mutual."

Most of the other participants, however, had a much more positive concept of community engagement and its terminology. As with mutual benefit and reciprocity, participants defined community engagement through either a personal perspective or an organizational one. In addition, almost every definition provided included a sentiment of improving the community or making positive changes in general. Thomas, for instance, explained that community engagement occurs "when a community is built on human connections that drive the relationships and public policy of where we live." Similarly Cartwright defined it: "as different parts of the community–private and public sectors, non-profit and for profit organizations; as well as the churches, neighborhoods, and civic

organizations; coming together for the common good or for a common purpose to help others." The idea of common good was echoed by Peter, whose definition was "serving the community with authenticity, passion and compassion, while providing a measurable contribution that will improve the conditions of the applicable constituency."

Through an organizational perspective, Frank described community engagement as "the process by which an organization intentionally reaches beyond its walls and utilizes resources to make a positive difference in the surrounding environment." Nathan's definition closely related to Frank's idea of reaching out and using resources: "I see community engagement as a conscious effort by an organization to include neighboring institutions, constituents, and resources in programming and decision-making." As with Frank and Nathan, the idea of resources also came up for Ricky. When I asked Ricky how he personally defined community engagement, he replied, "My personal definition of community engagement is being aware of the identities and needs of the people around you and using your privilege or power to ensure more equal access to resources."

Within many of the definitions, the elements of mutual benefit and reciprocity were pronounced. Sara's definition of community engagement referred to reciprocity by recognizing the need to understand the perspectives of those involved: "dialogue with stakeholders where all groups involved become educated on the others' points of view." Diane specifically framed her definition within the context of community-university partnerships. She explained that community engagement entails: "having the outlet or

connection to a university to be aware of what's happening within these communities and populations and what affects everyday lives. It's also a way for us to get support too."

Although participants who provided a definition of community engagement came to their definitions in different ways, overall, their explanations included more similarities than dissimilarities as well as an alignment between community engagement and the two elements of mutual benefit and reciprocity.

REFLECTIONS ON SUCCESSES OR FAILURES

Given the phenomenological approach to the study, it is important to understand not only what the participants experienced but how they experienced it as well. In defining mutual benefit and reciprocity, while most participants provided a definition, it was through the examples of successes, of failures, of reflection that a stronger indication of their personal definitions came through during their interviews. Most of the participants are at different stages and in different contexts in terms of their community-university partnerships, but it was this diversity that showed the commonalities between the participants in how they came about to their definitions. Thus, it is through the participants' reflections on successes, failures, and examples that gave them the 'how' to define mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocity.

When Mutual Benefit or Reciprocity Was Lacking

Some of the participants provided concrete descriptions either through their specific partnership with UT, DDCE, or another example of when mutual benefit or reciprocity failed for them. For the most part, the participants alluded to different

experiences they have had throughout their community engagement careers that cemented how they viewed and wanted to experience mutual benefit and reciprocity. Speaking from her experience, Urfreetodream explained that community engagement takes work and commitment to accomplish. For her, community engagement is:

> An opportunity so that everyone that is involved in the process understands two things: what their role is in the process and how they're supposed to give back once they're in that process. I've seen it done in the sense where you go in, [say] this is best for you, this is what you're going to do, and people walk away feeling like they don't really feel engaged, like they owned it. Those are the two things you have to give them, and you have to walk away because they have to own what it is or it doesn't work. Or it's not community engagement, it's self-engagement.

Urfreetodream went on to explain the concept of community: "you have to respect that the first part of community is common, which means that if the basic understanding isn't there, then it's not community engagement, it's just a conversation."

Sometimes, a missing element within the partnership affected the feasibility of mutual benefit and reciprocity. Anne Hathaway explained that while he appreciated the partnership with DDCE and his other partnerships within the university, more needed to be done specifically around relevant research for his organization's needs. For him, the lack of mutual benefit and reciprocity could be addressed through "the relevancy of the research out of that particular department would be the biggest help." The slow pace also hindered this aspect that Anne Hathaway felt occurred within the partnership and engagement with the university.

Beverly presented a noteworthy experience since she saw the inclusion and exclusion of mutual benefit and reciprocity within her partnership. While Beverly

acknowledged her appreciation for the first few years when DDCE had incubated her organization, and thus was providing resources and support, she also saw what improvement could be made for future collaborations for similar organizations to hers. Beverly explained that to actualize both elements, sustainability and collaboration are necessary:

> I think that it would be beneficial to both the university and the community for the relationship to really deepen and there be a long-term collaborative plan put together. That would be my hope. I think that something like that could serve as a model for how small organizations can engage with larger institutions

Diane had similar recommendations to Beverly's, given that her partnership with DDCE right now entails a mostly sponsorship support. In discussing what improvements can be made from the perspective of the community partner, Diane argued that mutual benefit and reciprocity need communication and joint planning in order for them to be part of a community-university partnership. Having a small organization, in comparison to the university and DDCE, Diane struggled with the same issues that Beverly indicated: an alignment of mission and goals within the much larger framework of the university and DDCE. For Diane, it came down to better understanding where her organization could connect: we "would love to know more about how our subject matter or our subject knowledge could enhance what DDCE is doing. I think it just comes back down to communication of what the university and DDCE [are] up to."

When Mutual Benefit or Reciprocity Did Occur

Understanding when mutual benefit or reciprocity occurred was most apparent for the community partners when initiatives or programs aligned with the goals and visions

that the partners wanted to gain from the partnership. The student element was used particularly throughout the examples of what mutual benefit or reciprocity should entail. This came from the participants describing their times as students or being UT alums or seeing the significance of community engagement that includes student engagement through service learning. For instance, when Sara was a graduate student at the LBJ School at UT Austin, it was her community engagement that established her ideas towards mutual benefit and reciprocity. Participating in the community project allowed Sara to see the benefit and success of the partnership; it also let her see what more could be done through this channel of engaging students in community engagement. According to Sara:

> There's so much opportunity for community organizations to utilize the student minds at UT. It's mutually beneficial for the students and for the organizations that use them. I've been part of it at the LBJ School. When we did policy research projects, we would work with the community organization; we were their work horses for two years. So I think that's just incredibly powerful. UT has some of the smartest, brightest people in the world attending there, so it's such a huge opportunity for our community to be able to work with UT and their students.

Thinking in the context of her current work, Sara emphasized the need that the resources of the university, be they students or research, are utilized to their fullest capacity given her personal experiences as a student.

Beverly had a similar experience when working with students for a community organization she was affiliated with previously. Juxtaposing that with the discontinued partnership with DDCE, Beverly explained why the work with student and university

resources were mutually beneficial for her. After reaching out to the relevant school at the university:

> We asked the students in their design programs as a project to come up with some possible renovation designs, and they came up with great ideas. A community was able to get students to have a project to work on and their product can be used by the community. That's like the perfect thing for community engagement between universities and the community.

In addition, the organization that Katalina represents is situated within the university and, as a result, has access and support of students as both interns and program coordinators. Since the organization reaches in as well as out of the university, it has provided for a unique experience where mutual benefit and reciprocity cyclically benefit the university, the students, and the community the organization serves. Speaking on the program coordinators, who are also social workers for the organization, Katalina emphasized: "it's because of them that we've become so successful, can't say good enough things for all of our program coordinators. And I think half of them are UT students or grads or are in grad school right now."

Since Olivia's partnership with DDCE revolves around student advancement, her context about mutual benefit and reciprocity, like those mentioned above, is about the gains and benefits to the students themselves. As the partnership with DDCE also entails a joint partnership with a local HBCU, Olivia recounted the benefits for the students from both higher education institutions. In her perspective, "I like the fact that they're bringing students together…because I also know students work in their own silos." Moreover, for Ricky, the student advancement piece within his organization is maintained by providing resources from the university to the students he serves. His role

itself, in Ricky's opinion, is part of the resources that the partnership entails. Ricky mentioned that he sees the mutual benefit and reciprocity given the structure of the partnership: "I would say it works out really well because we're able to define our goals separately and then come in and just focus on the students." While a number of participants used examples of how students are directly benefiting or are part of the equation for community engagement, these examples were used to indicate how they see mutual benefit and reciprocity occurring within community-university partnerships.

Some of the participants discussed how attaining their organizations' purposes affirm the successes of the partnerships. Through this notion, the participants described and shared their thoughts on mutual benefit or reciprocity. For most of the participants, using examples helped not only better define mutual benefit and reciprocity, but it also showed how the participants were able to come to those definitions. Frank, Lee, Thomas, and Nathan all shared their thoughts on mutual benefit and reciprocity within this notion.

Frank's take on reciprocity emerged from his professional connection to the university and his goals through his organization. Given the history of the university towards the African American communities, Frank has always worked to ensure that perceptions about the university are changed to better reflect the advances that the university, particularly through the DDCE, is accomplishing to improve those strained relationships. For him, reciprocity is not only in the community-university partnership but also in how it affects the larger Austin community. According to Frank:

> I want to be in a position where anyone says UT is not reaching out especially to the African American community, I can say you are wrong. It's doing, this, this,

> and this. And I am part of it; do you want to be part of it? That's where the reciprocity comes in: changing perception.

Changing perceptions was a common theme throughout Frank's descriptions about community engagement and community-university partnerships given that he has worked throughout his career to ensure more opportunities for young African American men. This, unfortunately, has not been an easy process for him, and in coming to UT Austin, Frank found it imperative to involve the university with the needs of the community.

Lee explained that for his organization's partnership with DDCE, it all centered on communication. In describing his partnership, he stated that it worked to the benefits of both when each side clarified its needs. Lee explained that "it's been a good working relationship. I admire the fact that the department seems to be open to suggestions and cooperation with others." That openness and communication are what Lee found important: "it goes both ways. They have to tell us what we can do differently, that makes it work… so we keep an open line of communication. That's all you can do."

Both Thomas and Nathan discussed the benefit for the communities within successful community-university partnerships. For these two participants, the goals of the partnerships that are geared towards improvements for the community lead to mutual benefit and reciprocity. Thomas represents an organization that convenes various parts of the community together to endorse change and foster dialogue. He sees the partnership with DDCE as one such entity within the larger scope of the Austin community and also as an entity that provides a unique position in the community. Thomas stated that:

> Us working with them can provide a platform for the community to have some dialogue. Neither one of us–the educational institution or [my organization]–is

> going to be the decision-makers. Our job is to queue that information and data up. There are very few entities that I think can hold that position without being perceived as having an opinion or a bias or leaning towards some solution. I think for a university-organization perspective, we're more about the dialogue. Let the policymakers make the policy decisions. But we want to ensure–and I think that both of us can help ensure–that representation of all voices is at the table.

The idea of convening was also a point that Nathan shared with Thomas. The organization that Nathan represents includes affinity groups based on race and ethnicity. Through community engagement, the perceptions and bringing together people to form a community have allowed Nathan to interpret the success of this community-university partnership. According to Nathan, "true community engagement not just in Austin but in communities outside has given our networks something to mobilize around;" something that they previously were not able nor had the opportunity to do. As a result of this engagement, "they see community engagement as a way to spread the word that you can have a successful relationship with the University of Texas."

For some of the participants, longevity within the community has solidified mutual benefit and reciprocity for them. Servant's experiences have provided him with a context to understand the scope and effect of an entity like the DDCE. He expressed that the DDCE has "put imprints around this community. And I think that's healthy because you come into the community, you collaborate with the community, but you don't overtake the community, which is what the image of UT has been previously." Cartwright described how the efforts that the DDCE does in connecting in different parts of the city to reach out to the community have helped create mutual beneficial partnerships as well as a community. For her, the three community leadership events that

the DDCE hosts annually "help people to come together from all walks of life that otherwise would not see each other. Those lines would not intersect."

The partnership that Peter has with DDCE has led to a stronger connection with DDCE through the My Brother's Keeper initiative in the Austin area.[1] Working in conjunction with DDCE, Peter reflected on the mutual benefit and engagement at such caliber and scope within the various communities of Austin. Speaking on My Brother's Keeper, Peter explained that its alignment with his organization's mission has led to a prime example of reciprocity and mutual benefit. Specifically, he explained: "so rather than start something from scratch, why don't we leverage each other's resources and that will not only save time but also will save money and that will create greater impact."

INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND RECIPROCITY

Although the participants were asked to define mutual benefit and reciprocity as two separate terms, more often than not, either within their descriptions of both elements or throughout the interviews, the participants described mutual benefit and reciprocity in a way that indicated that the two are interconnected within community-university partnerships or community engagement. This emerged as the composite theme of research question one because the participants directly or indirectly showed the importance of having these elements within their expectations and experiences in

[1] My Brother's Keeper (MBK) is an initiative begun by President Barack Obama in 2014 based on six milestones that will positively affect the lives and success of boys and young men of color. In 2015, the city of Austin accepted the MBK challenge and created a steering committee and taskforce to create change in the Greater Austin area. This alliance includes partners from higher education institutions, local government, local independent school districts, businesses, nonprofits, and faith based institutions to come together and create change through the Greater Austin Area My Brother's Keeper.

community-university partnerships. Some participants, like Sara, realized that the two were not necessarily synonymous. As she explained, "I would hope that reciprocity and mutually beneficial are similar just in their definitions. I guess reciprocity doesn't have to be mutual." At the same time, Sara recognized the influence one had over the other. In addition, Nathan saw the similarities of mutual benefit and reciprocity. When asked to define reciprocity, Nathan replied by first stating the similarity of the two and then explaining: "It's making promises that are in the best interests of the other side and then following through on those promises. That's holding your institution accountable to what you would want the volunteers and partners to hold themselves accountable to." Accountability within Nathan's descriptions tied to both mutual benefit and reciprocity through the understanding that in order for a community-university partnership to be both mutually beneficial and reciprocal, all partners have to have an investment in the partnership through its goals, actions, and sustainability. Expanding on that, Nathan explained:

> I think that in order for it to actually be a partnership both sides have to recognize that they each have independent values that are worth striving towards and then a partnership needs to mutually engage both of those sets of values. I don't think that really works if one side is attempting to do all of the gaining and not any of the giving.

Urfreetodream also linked her definition of reciprocity to her definition of mutual benefit at the same time as echoing a similar sentiment to Nathan's last statement: "You have to own it; you can't just keep taking and taking." Similarly, for Cartwright, the connection between mutual benefit and reciprocity was needed for intentionality within the partnership. As she explained about the two elements, "there is intentional exchange.

Not come and show up and say: hey, we've been over here, we gave you 10 crumpets and we are walking away….It has to be intentional. There has to be a benefit."

In addition, the interconnection did not end with the definitions the participants provided. When participants used examples and scenarios to show their experiences in community engagement and community-university partnerships, they either implicitly or explicitly referred to their definitions of community engagement, mutually beneficial partnerships, or reciprocity. Speaking from the perspective of non-profits, Diane identified reciprocity in community engagement by recognizing the knowledge and expertise that such organizations bring to a partnership. As with other participants, Diane began her explanation by alluding back to her earlier description of mutual benefit:

> I think again, it's what you're willing to share in time, resources, monetary, your energy of the people involved. There are a lot of times when nonprofits hold knowledge because we're on the ground. We're on the ground, we understand the needs, but we're willing to share. And then just making sure that the partner's aware of what the needs are of that particular nonprofit, whether it's volunteers or monetary need or whatever it is, build that into a standard memorandum of understanding or an agreement and really lay out the expectations.

The role of non-profits in engagement was also important for Peter. He explained that "coming from the school of Susan Dreyfus," her philosophy on engagement helped him to understand the connection between mutual benefit and reciprocity. According to Peter, Dreyfus states that "because people and communities face complex challenges and find convoluted, redundant systems of services and organizations to be discouraging, nonprofits must engage in meaningful, coordinated partnerships and networks." For Peter, this entails having "an equitable exchange or social-good impact contributions that will create measurable outcomes for a community in need of social-good contributions."

Although each participant approached the definitions of mutual benefit, reciprocity, and even community engagement in different terms, the similarities within their descriptions suggest the interconnections they have experienced within this specific community-university partnership and other types of engagement they have experienced. The successes and failures within their engagements often framed the participants' conception of mutual benefit and reciprocity and vice versa. This interplay between definitions and experiences allowed the participants to reflect on what they saw as essential within community-university partnerships as well as improvements that they would want to see particularly through the lens of their personal missions, organizational goals, or engagement in general.

Research Question Two: Meaning Making of Experiences

Through the interviews, follow-up emails, and questionnaire responses, the participants related their experiences and perceptions about their involvement in community-university partnerships. By doing so, the participants provided the data to answer the second research question that informs this study: "How do community agents, who represent community partners with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin, make meaning of their experiences in a community-university partnership?" What became apparent throughout the study is that the participants' personal set of beliefs towards engaging and their communities have influenced their experiences in community engagement either previously or through current partnerships. In addition, the elements of relationships, knowledge, perspectives,

and values within the conceptual framework were reiterated by the participants through their descriptions that informed their lived experiences about being part of a community-university partnership as a community agent. Research question two, more so than any other question within the study, provides the greatest context to underscore the lived experiences of the participants. Although the themes within the following sections represent the lived experiences of the 15 participants in this study, the commonalities within their stories add substance to the conceptual framework created for this study, which will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

To better understand the lived experiences of community agents in community-university partnership, within the following sections, the textural, structural, and composite themes will be presented in regards to research question two. Through the textural descriptor of *Connection to a Personal or Organizational Mission* and a structural descriptor of *Commitment to a Cause*, the participants' experiences in participating, maintaining, and believing in community-university partnership for a higher purpose are explained. For all the participants, the idea of mission became apparent to them early on in their lives or as they found work that aligned with what they wanted to continue doing. That mission often translated into or was formed by a cause that the participants feel strongly about and work towards in their personal or professional capacity or both. The composite theme of *Beyond Oneself* combines the elements of the textural and structural descriptions together as it captures the lived experiences of the community agents in connecting their personal or organizational goals with working towards a cause that is often larger than the individual or even the

organization itself. Figure 5.2 provides a breakdown of the descriptors and composite theme.

Table 5.2

Research Question Two Descriptors and Theme

	Textural Descriptor	**Structural Descriptor**
How do community agents, who represent community partners with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin, make meaning of their experiences in a community-university partnership	Connection to Personal or Organizational Mission	Commitment to a Cause
Composite Theme	Beyond Oneself	

CONNECTION TO PERSONAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION

In the analysis of research question one, the connection between personal and organizational missions was represented in how the participants defined mutual benefit, reciprocity, or community engagement. Given that there is a relationship between definitions and lived experiences–as will be further seen in the sections on research question three–it is understandable that the participants' missions are also represented within their lived experiences of being part of a community-university partners. The participants have developed these missions throughout their lives, careers, or the relationships that they have built within their different communities. As with anything, missions have changed to better reflect the participants' needs as well as those needs they perceive the communities they serve or support have. The same is true for the organizations that the participants represent. Work does not happen in a vacuum, and

that may be truer when it comes to community engagement work given the myriad factors that influence it from political climate to a city's past and to the personal backgrounds of those involved. As a result, this section will look at what the participants experienced in community engagement through a community-university partnership.

Starting at the beginning, almost all participants were able to trace their trajectory into community engagement through their familial, educational, or professional backgrounds. The connections that the participants made in describing the rationale for their involvement in community engagement work often centered around the personal beliefs and backgrounds, which have shaped how they see their contributions to their communities as well as what they can attain by being part of community engagement, including through community-university partnerships. When it came to describing their personal backgrounds, most of the participants indicated a calling to this type of work that has provided them with the determination to achieve success through community engagement. In addition, regardless of how participants defined community, it was the connections that they had made or found with their communities that further spurred their efforts to work towards a larger cause.

Since this study had a specific focus on Austin-based partnerships, it was foreseeable that many of the participants have been in Austin for a number of years, including being true Austinites or having come to study at UT Austin and stayed. This characteristic provides an interesting context especially within the theme of connections to the community.

Calling

For a majority of the participants, a calling, passion, desire, or a personal connection led them to engage in community engagement and often from an early age. Factors such as family involvement, faith, and turning points in their lives allowed the participants to see not only their role through community engagement but also the overall benefit that could be accomplished through engagement. This calling to community engagement has led many of the participants to engage with the community beyond the parameters of this community-university partnership or the community engagement that occurs within the scope of their employment. Indeed, this calling has affected the participants' perspectives and personal missions. Even for those participants who recognized the need for community engagement later on in their lives, they acknowledged that that created changes in how they led their lives or what employment opportunities they took. This calling often helped shape the personal missions that the participants have which, in turn, has affected how they experience community engagement through community-university partnerships.

Engaging with the community appears to be an organic process for many of the participants. It started from having parents or family members involved within the community, having a significant event in their formative years, or it naturally occurred for the participants as they moved their educational or career trajectories. Olivia described how her parents' efforts in the community have affected how her siblings and she have taken on careers that help their respective communities:

> Part of it just has to do, I'm sure you've heard this, with my parents. They've always been, no matter where we've lived, my dad and mom have always been

> involved…they also realized, both of them, that in order to make their lives better for us, they had to be involved. They're a mirror of what I've done and my brother's done. He's a vice president of a non-profit organization in Denver. I think basically for my family, we know that you don't make things better just for yourself. You have to make it better for your community.

For those participants who mentioned their family connections in community engagement, that link appears to be, if not a strong motivator, then a grounding for the work that they have done throughout the years for their communities. The idea of serving the community for Cartwright stemmed from her family's connection to the community, which she traced back to her paternal grandfather's work in his community and even her maternal grandmother's community engagement in Jamaica. As Cartwright explained: "it's in the blood to get involved." Moreover, Olivia's experience included the concept of working in the community for the greater good or for a greater cause. This theme will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Two participants discussed how their backgrounds played a significant role in their community work. Urfreetodream's upbringing in the foster care system influenced what she does now and how she interacts with others. Her background has led her to the creation of a non-profit that focuses on children and youth in the foster system today. In describing her past in the foster system, she said:

> I think that's the big experience that has taught me to do a lot of things–a whole lot of things. It taught me to be more observant; be more aware of people; unfortunately, to read people really quickly and decide whether I want to be around them. And to categorize myself, not necessarily a pupil, but to decide what level I want to be engaged [at].

Working in the area of improving the lives of foster children is only one of Urfreetodream's passions. While listing out her social and cultural identities,

Urfreetodream explained her work with entities "that address issues in the foster system, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and education. Those are my three passions. Anything that falls within those things that I can do or help with, then I will do that." As Urfreetodream credits her upbringing for her work in the community, she is not alone in that sentiment. For Katalina, wanting to increase higher education attainment by young Latinas drove her to this new position with her non-profit. It was her background of being a first-generation student at UT Austin that encouraged Katalina to make the experiences of Latina students easier than what she went through: "They'll go through challenges but not as deep and as tough as it was for me. That's a real motivation for me to always wanting to give back to the Hispanic community."

A number of other participants found their calling once they started in their professional or educational careers. After working with the Daughters of Charity, Thomas "just felt a little bigger calling" to do more for his community. It was through this work that Thomas also incorporated the charity's mission into how he works in the community:

> The favorite phrase for me that they taught me very clearly: no margin, no mission. That if you're going to be in this space, you really need to make sure and be looking at it from a business perspective. Because the last thing we need to do, that if you go out and serve and be in the community space and you can't deliver or can't be there the next day, don't come out at all.

However, it was Thomas's faith that influenced his work in this realm and led him to his initial entrée with the Daughters of Charity:

> Community engagement is core to my spiritual calling as an old school Catholic. I believe my faith is based on going to church on Sunday to be refreshed for the other six days where I am called to live my faith in helping my community.

Other participants, including Servant and Cartwright, mentioned the role of their faith within their community engagement work.

This idea of purposeful engagement was a theme that was apparent throughout Thomas' experiences in community engagement including community-university partnerships. Frank also saw the need for purposeful engagement during the beginning of his career in Chicago and again when he came to Austin over thirty years ago. After working in secondary schools in Chicago, Frank recognized the need for role models for young men of color that was often lacking outside of the athletic side of education. When he arrived in Austin, he again saw the same issue manifest itself, yet he found himself often the only Black administrator in Austin public schools. As a result, Frank described his connection to community engagement as occurring "kind of through osmosis." In examining his current work in the community, Frank explained that he was having "a personal craving" to connect with "other Black men who are about something– who are trying to give back to the community. It is just a personal satisfaction in knowing that I don't feel I have to do it alone now."

In addition, it was after graduation and working in the private sector for a time that Diane identified the need for community engagement. After some personal transitions, which led to a career transition into the not-for profit-arena, Diane began to see:

> That there was this community out there that wanted to work for free, which blew my mind. But they were doing it for a greater cause….So I think that's when my consciousness woke up a little bit that there's more out there. I started to get much more heavily involved with community engagement and issues that affect

> our communities. I started to realize that that's not just doing the work and making sure people have access to resources but you have to go outside and start engaging the difference in cultures by your community to make change. But I think it wasn't until post-graduation that I stuck my head out and saw that there's a whole other world out there.

For Diane, as with many of the participants in the study, finding her way into community work helped strengthen a calling that came either early in life or as Diane stated, as "a late bloomer in this world" of community engagement.

While one of the participants chose the name Servant, since he believed it represented his role within the community and, more importantly, his personal belief system, two other participants also discussed the idea of serving or being a servant within the context of community engagement. For all three of the participants, the idea of servant connected to how they saw their calling to engaging with their larger communities. Servant described his life's journey and how he came to the realization of the importance of serving others:

> I've learned in life. My great-great-grandmother was a slave – actually a slave. She was property. She was property. So I had the privilege of learning life from that filter. And I remember her from when I was five. I'm siting here in front of you from that journey. So you're dealing with the fact that reciprocity is that you don't really owe me anything, but what I owe you is to try to make sure that first, I'm a servant, and if I'm a public servant, that really is something. That's my stewardship for that. I need to understand how to best support and serve you.

Servant described his role in society as that of a brother to all his brothers and sisters. Through this conceptualization, Servant is able to actualize his personal mission of creating change for his community while recognizing the importance of respecting others and helping through their journeys.

When I asked Peter how he first started engaging with the community, he explained: "You know, getting involved with community engagement, I think it's always been a passion. I've always had servant heart." This passion was solidified for Peter almost ten years ago when the economy affected his career and resulted in a major career change for him. During that transitional time, Peter realized he could do more for his community. He began a volunteer initiative on financial literacy for high school students, mostly Hispanic, in the Houston area. This opportunity allowed Peter to "ramp up my community engagement" as he was connecting with Hispanic high-school students and teaching the importance of financial literacy and savings. This passion led Peter on the trajectory that ultimately moved him to Austin and his current role here. Along the way, however, it was that initial service of teaching financial literacy to high school students in Houston that "started a world of opportunities that led to other leadership volunteer opportunities…from then, it's just exploded into other angles of civic engagement, not only Latino and Latina students, but students overall, and other community service, ambitions, and commitments."

For Cartwright, the idea of being a servant came out of her thoughts about community-university partnerships. These partnerships are the relationships that Cartwright has made an effort to engage with and enhance because for her, they are connections that need to be made between East Austin and West and between North and South Austin. Although she acknowledged that the trepidation that some have about going to different areas in Austin have affected such relationships, "the segregation that has occurred in the past, people think well, I'm going to my respective corner and I don't

need to know what's over there." However, Cartwright explained that it was through community-university partnerships that bridging the gap within the city could occur. She specifically mentioned the work that DDCE is doing in East Austin that is fostering needed change:

> I think it's beautiful what the Diversity Division is doing. I think it's critical for young people to understand the importance of giving back. What it does is it gives you a sense of what it is to be a servant- to give and to receive- because you gain new friendships. It helps people to grow. It helps you to become responsible and to become good citizens. So I think it's an excellent thing. It's really beautiful.

For most participants, how they made meaning of community-university partnerships within community engagement was tied to their belief system surrounding the purpose and cause of engagement. Those who shared their callings or passions about working in the community, continued to connect, directly or indirectly, back to their rationale of engaging in their communities for a specific goal or purpose.

Community Connections

In addition to a calling or personal connection, participants indicated a deep-rooted connection to their communities that influenced their work in engagement. Communities have different meanings for the participants, and for most, the community they discussed depended on the context of their examples, experiences, or missions. Regardless of that, however, these bonds have shaped how the participants as community agents partake in community engagement in general and in community-university partnerships in particular. More so than anything else, personal background and racial/ethnic background played a significant role in how and why participants chose to

be part of community engagement. Hence, those ties have helped shape the lived experiences of the community agents.

Servant described his connection to the community, which started as a young child. As he explained during the interview: "my ultimate agenda is the community. That I love my community; it's been good to me. I've lived in all parts of this town; I've worked in all parts of this town." Born and raised in Austin, Servant has a strong foundation in the city, and this agenda, as he styled it, originated from how his parents raised him. Delineating it as the various C's in his life, Servant explained the links that ultimately center on his work in the community:

> I've been involved in community engagement since my childhood. My orientation to life is that you go from the cradle. You can have the church or your faith, and your family orientation to that. And to me, this next one is either the classroom, school–that's another C–or the community. My parents introduced me to community as a child, and their teachings to me was that they introduced me to my faith. The minute I start dealing with anyone outside of myself, that's community.

As a result of his philosophy towards community engagement, Servant, like other participants, bases his current work with the goals that he set out to accomplish early on his life.

Lee's fifty years in Austin have allowed him to see not only the changes but also the needs that the East Austin community has. Through his local newspaper, communicating the good and the accomplishments of people within the East Austin community has always been an important facet for Lee. Given the portrayal of Black people in the media, Lee found it imperative that media outlets, like his, ensure the

positive representation of the people, work, and community in East Austin. According to Lee:

> We just want to highlight the good news of the East Austin community. What we have going on back in those days was most of the news that made the major paper was bad news. It always seemed to make it to the first two or three pages in the newspaper and the good news was always buried away back in the back. And we organized [the newspaper] for that purpose. Also as a means of communicating, because we have a lot of community based organizations doing a lot of great things. They had no way of getting the word out about their events.

Giving back to his community by highlighting it has helped Lee make strong connections in East Austin. More important than that to Lee is the youth program that his newspaper established 30 years ago. For Lee, this program maintains the connections within the East Austin community as well as provides an opportunity for youth to learn a career. As Lee emphasized, "we needed people to come to replace me and others; papers like myself to carry the tradition on. Black press is 175 years old, so we have to keep that" continuation.

Beverly also described how enhancing and supporting the Black community in Austin, specifically in East Austin, has grounded her work. Through her various roles, Beverly was a major player in a citywide taskforce to present recommendations that would address the "lack of Black culture in public spaces in Austin." Working with different entities across the city centered on the arts and culture, Beverly explained that the goal was to give back to the community by creating an organization that would "be about education, preservation, supporting ongoing cultural productions, and how all of that feeds economic development for the area." Having lived, worked, and experienced the struggles that happened in Austin, Beverly explained: "As I learned the story about

Austin and East Austin, it became very compelling to me and it made me want to construct this [organization] and do the work that we do."

Katalina expressed that her connection to the Hispanic community in Austin motivated her and led her to the organization where she currently works. As a UT Austin alumna, Katalina felt the disconnect that many Latinas and Latinos felt on campus; while that has shaped her personal mission as was described above, it also related to what she believes her role in the Latino community to be. Consequently, Katalina recounted that her involvement with a Hispanic student group on campus:

> Solidified the connection of our community base, those of us who obtained college education, that we knew we had to give back and we all had that sense of desire to give back. So that kind of forged the path to me that no matter what I did - I raised a family while I fulfilled my career goals and achievements -I was still always giving back to the community.

Although Katalina has been giving back to the Hispanic community since she was a student, her current role has helped her "maintain that sense of community." Representing college-educated Hispanics is an important part of Katalina's connection to the Hispanic community, and something that she wants to see enhanced through the various networks she represents. Katalina maintained that "what I'm finding is in the Hispanic community, those of us who obtained a college education–it's so far and few between, we're such a small minority–that most of us feel obligated to give back."

Serving the Hispanic community was also significant to Peter through his organization's goals as well as his personal mission. Peter defined the role of the organization through a strategic plan that focuses on "economic development, community, education, leadership, and business networking." More than the

organization's vision and mission, Peter explained that "it all comes down to that we feel like there's a connection between the Hispanic business, the Hispanic consumer, and the Hispanic student." Making sure the needs of the Hispanic community are addressed through the organization further allow Peter to accomplish his personal dedication to the Hispanic community in Austin.

For both Sara and Ricky, it was their time as a graduate and undergraduate student, respectively, at UT Austin that cemented their connection to the communities they continue to serve today. Sara's experience outside the classroom had a large impact on how she saw the role of community engagement in creating change for a community. Speaking about the campaign she created on campus in 2005 to educate constituents, on and off campus, about the Texas Legislature's Prop Two to ban gay marriage, Sara described the role of engagement in regards to the community:

> I was a grad student and I knew I needed to do something because I've always been involved and organizing. I created a campaign on campus against Prop Two. Creating that campaign and getting to reach across the campus, I had a team of undergrads and grad students; we reached out to work with so many faculty, professors, and had so much support across the campus and got so many it is registered. Let me remind you this was all pre-Facebook. It was boots on the ground, and we were going into the dorms and figured out every possible way we could advertise this was happening and getting students involved and registered to vote. That was for me a really important part of my life and experience was getting to do that–really something from scratch that turned out to be that big and that meaningful.

Sara gave this example as part of her response about how community engagement has affected her personally. While this experience was "on the other side of the partnership at that point because I was in the University," it solidified Sara's belief in organizing and connecting with a community to further a cause.

Although Ricky is working on the direction his career will take, he wants it to center on the community he has identified–students. It was through engagement as a student himself that Ricky found that connection. Still at the beginning of his career, Ricky indicated that:

> I didn't really have a certain type of community engagement that I enjoyed the most until I discovered the orientation advisor program. I was like this is a really cool opportunity to impact the trajectory of these students who are coming into college and may be scared and may not be sure if this is a good fit for them. And I really liked the idea of being a host and being a mentor and being able to motivate students and kind of show them that if we can do it, you can do it, too. So that's the kind of engagement that I enjoy the most, I would say, is the mentorship aspect of it.

In his current role, Ricky has been able to unite this type of engagement with helping high school students accomplish their higher education goals.

Similar to Ricky, Nathan found his community connection through his work first in Chicago and then when he came back to Austin. Through his work in various non-profits in both cities, Nathan explained that for him, his "passion has always been diversity and trying to expand educational opportunities into areas and demographics where they're either lacking behind or just have never been." As a result, the connection to community for Nathan has been focused more on the product–educational outreach–than a specific subset of a community. Given that his professional background in nonprofits focused on financial literacy and his graduate education in political science, Nathan found his niche and passion through community engagement. Nathan concluded, "I really always have had a desire to connect government initiatives with the community

at-large and to try and find ways to increase citizens' access to those initiatives, primarily through schooling."

Rationale for Engaging

Understanding why the participants engaged in community engagement work and in community-university partnerships became an important point within the study. Although an underlying assumption of the participants' work could be that community engagement is part of their job duties, that is too simplistic of a description for why the participants engage. Indeed, two of the participants, Katalina and Frank, observed that their work in the community was a form of reinforcement to their personal missions and aspirations. Katalina revealed that being in a community-university partnership and in community engagement work "reinforced that I'm doing the right thing." When I asked the same question to Frank, he also used the similar description about how this work has affected him personally. Speaking candidly, Frank said:

> It has reinforced what I have tried to do most of my adult life. It is just that for me, most of my adult life was singular, was just me trying to lead, thinking I was out there lone ranger-ing. What this partnership has taught me is that this is not necessarily the case.

This reinforcement provided a justification for both Katalina and Frank that connected their work to their missions.

Similar to providing reinforcement, some of the participants described their motivation to engage in the first place. As was the case for Nathan, a personal motivation led him to his current role. Being a UT Austin alumnus and wanting the opportunity to mesh his missions of diversity work with educational opportunities, Nathan explained

that through his work, he "really wanted to make UT a place that could be proud of its diverse alumni base and also have its alumni be proud of the university." Further validating his participation in community engagement, Nathan said:

> I need to have a job where I can sleep easy at night, thinking that I at least attempted to make the world a little better place that day. I'm hoping that I'll always get to stay in the field of diversity and outreach.

The concept of diversity, although not a specific part of the study, came up often by the participants given their work, the mission and goals of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, and the partnerships that have formed between their organizations and the division. For instance, Servant had a more pragmatic explanation of why he engages and why engagement is important in order to address the diversity in our community: "we're all affected by everyone. Everyone," and "if we're developing diversity of this country and this state, you can't do policy" as the only way to reach out to all the people. Therefore, for Servant, community engagement is that mechanism that can affect everyone. Although Servant did not couch his description with the idea of diversity, his sentiments are similar to Peter's. Discussing some of the community events his organization hosts, Peter described the importance of diversity:

> Especially when you look at the makeup of the community and where it's headed. We want to make sure that we celebrate diversity. We feel strongly that diversity is not only our strongest economic development asset, but it's our strongest asset overall.

Frank also alluded for the need for acknowledging diversity through community engagement. Frank rationalized that he engages specifically with UT Austin because "we live in a diverse state, we want perceptions to be positive with those constituents."

Three of the participants, Urfreetodream, Beverly, and Olivia, underscored the ideas of hope, connection, and commitment as part of the reasons why they engage in community engagement, either through community-university partnerships or not. Based on Urfreetodream's childhood as well as her organization that helps foster children experience, giving hope is what she explained community organizations should be doing. Indeed, that is why Urfreetodream is involved in the community herself. She posited that "when we talk about community organizations, we are only asking about in what way do you provide hope. That's really the question to ask." On the other hand, Beverly rationalized engaging, from both a personal and an organizational standpoint, is based on making connections for people around ideas. For Beverly, that is what community organizing should entail:

> Because whether you are organizing artists or you are trying to make connections to audiences, the act of finding those places where people connect and bring them together around that is community organizing. That is what a lot of non-profits and individuals are making [engagement] about. How to connect people around concepts.

Olivia's reasoning for participating in community engagement is commitment: both in the cause and to the organization. As a self-proclaimed "organization junkie," Olivia has deep faith in what organizations in the community can do to further a cause. However, Olivia explained that in community work, people often become disillusioned by an organization they are involved with for various reasons. However, perseverance makes community engagement effective. As a result, Olivia recommended:

> A commitment that once you find something you're committed to, to stay in there even when things go bad, even when it looks like they don't have their stuff together. Every organization's going to have its pitfalls, they're going to have its

> bumps in the road. But if you think you should give up on the organization when that happens then you don't understand the way organizations work. Because I've had people say, oh, the NAACP, they don't do anything. I'm going to form my own organization. I always say hang in there and if you are contributing and they recognize that you're a leader, you can be a leader in that organization.

COMMITMENT TO A CAUSE

Having a commitment to a cause is a strong motivator for all the participants in this study. Whether it stemmed from a personal goal or an organizational one, it did not diminish the belief that the participants had in working towards that cause. For most, the partnership with DDCE and UT Austin was one mechanism through which they could reach their goals. In addition, context was an important consideration in understanding how the participants experienced being in community engagement and community-university partnerships. These various elements played a significant role in how participants came to experience their roles in engagement; therefore, research question two seeks to ascertain the lived experiences of being in a community-university partnership. The participants saw community-university partnerships as part of their larger community engagement work; consequently, distinguishing them would have been counterintuitive to having rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the community agents.

As a result, the following sections present the participants' perceptions about community engagement from their own perspective, the community side, and the university side. This underscores how the participants made meaning of their experiences. Community engagement work does not occur in a vacuum. This is quite evident in how the participants explained what they expected from a university partner

and how the history of Austin and the university and today's context have affected the participants' causes. In addition, community-university partnerships were seen as an extension of the participants' overall commitment to a larger cause; therefore, most of the participants described the worth of engagement using the larger umbrella of community engagement rather than community-university partnerships.

The Worth of Engagement

The effect of engagement on the participants and their professional careers was subjective. Understandably, how the participants viewed community engagement and its worth were based on the focus area that the participants were engaged in and trying to improve. This often influenced the expectations they had about what the engagement should and did entail. Regardless of the different areas and scopes that the participants represented, they all agreed that community engagement was a necessary part of their work.

While all found the worth of engagement, two participants were hesitant to continue seeking out higher education institutions to further their causes. This issue came about based on experiences or from facing difficulties within their current community-university partnerships. Yet when it came to community engagement in general, neither one of them indicated any reticence in working for the good of their communities. Frank postulated that while he was unsure if he would continue to engage with university partners if he were to go to a different city, he "would definitely continue with community partnerships, and if there was an opportunity to engage the major university in that area, I would definitely attempt it, now that I have had this experience."

Beverly, being the only participant with an inactive community-university partnership, provided her rationale as to why she would not seek out partnerships with higher education institutions, especially with larger universities. She posited:

> As I said in the beginning, it is very difficult for community-based groups to engage on an equal playing field with large institutions. When you have limited resources that resource could go to something that is going to something that can get you a great gain. So, unless your project has something directly to do with the university, I don't think it is going to get you great gain.

Beverly found that even a large institution with many resources often left smaller organizations at a loss about whom to contact and where to receive the needed support through a partnership.

Yet others readily explained why engaging with higher education institutions through community-university partnerships was necessary. The alignment between the participants' causes and higher education was a motivating factor in their rationales. Katalina said she would "absolutely" continue to engage with the university, especially to address the low rate of Latino student enrollment and persistence. Given that Katalina's cause specifically relates to higher education, she explained her want to expand her organization's partnerships with more colleges and universities. In a similar way, Urfreetodream reasoned that partnering with higher education institutions is indispensable given the learning and educational purposes: "I think it is important….If you drop out of that spectrum, and you don't really know what's going on, then you can't always learn….I think there's an education component in everything."

Diane and Ricky both acknowledged the role of UT Austin specifically in continuing their work through community-university partnerships. For them, UT Austin

has had a significant impact on them as alumni and community partners. In staying within the nonprofit world, Diane concluded, "if I wind up in another nonprofit or in another capacity, I think my goal in terms of service and servicing the local community, UT's part of the local community." Diane recognized that community work entails all relevant parts of the community coming together, and given UT Austin's role in the city, she understood the need for working with the university to further a community cause. Diane posited that a community-university partnership "provides a lot of engagement points for folks to do something beyond, beyond what they're prescribed to do." Ricky, on the other hand, saw working with UT Austin as a way to foster his already established connections. As a recent alumnus, keeping his association with the university has helped him transition into community engagement work. Ricky described community-university partnerships:

> I think they're awesome…being engaged in this community-university partnership gave me a way to extend my connection to UT. I didn't have to just graduate and be done and say bye. I'm still able to leverage UT's resources for the people around me and also for myself to get an experience of what it's like to be in this role. And I would definitely be interested in finding other partnerships with universities, particular UT, because of the familiarity and because of how I feel like they're doing a really good job.

As was common with the participants who were also alumni of the university, the relationship that they established with their alma mater as students extended to how they saw the worth of engaging with it as a community partner.

Cartwright also discussed the university's role in community engagement but from the perspective of how the engagement helps the university build relationships in the different areas of the city. For UT Austin, Cartwright believes that "it is very critical

that there is a relationship as big as UT is." Having the university involved in the community "shows that they care about what goes on in those communities. And they want to be related and connected to that." However, this endeavor is not only UT Austin's responsibility, according to Cartwright, but also the other higher education institutions in the area. The need for creating engagement that spans the communities in Austin will help alleviate the segregation that occurs in the city: "The segregation that has occurred in the past, people think, well I'm going to my respective corner and I don't need to know what's over there."

Thomas, Peter, and Nathan explained the value of engaging with universities in terms of the gains attained by various entities. Speaking through a student focus as well as a business lens, Thomas explained that community-university partnerships lead to "an all-win situation." By focusing on the student benefits, Thomas argued that "we need to ensure that our student populations are getting real work in the community space….I think that community public space, personally I believe, that's where real innovation occurs." Peter also mentioned the student aspect as well as the various constituents within the university that help make meaningful partnerships in the community. In this way, impactful engagement can occur. Peter reasoned:

> I think that is an enduring relationship with meat, you know, because there's all sorts of people involved. There's administration, there's staff, there's faculty, and there's students. And then there's the impact that's being generated through the university, through its engagement efforts, outreach efforts, recruitment efforts, research efforts. I think it just makes all the sense in the world.

The community-university element is an important way for Peter to work on various topics that relate to his cause, including workforce development, diversity and inclusion, as well as community engagement itself.

Since Nathan works directly with the university's alumni including the groups that represent the African American and Latino affinity networks, how the engagement has affected the alumni is telling for Nathan. He described that the partnership has led to "true community engagement not just in Austin but in communities outside [which] has given our networks something to mobilize around." Speaking on behalf of the Black alumni group, Nathan detailed:

> Especially with the Black alumni–given the small number of Black students on campus and the difficulty we've had recruiting Black students to come to UT. They see community engagement as a way to spread the word that you can have a successful relationship with the University of Texas as a black student, a Black alum.

For Nathan, the expansion of the partnership in the past few years has led to an increase in positive perceptions as well as more interaction across the campus. He explained that this engagement means that "we're getting access, and in exchange, the University and DDCE are getting access to alumni and information. So we are both able to gather something out of that that increases the engagement capability of both organizations."

Olivia saw the importance of community engagement through community-university partnership by recounting the changes that have happened to the university itself. Through the DDCE and its leadership, Olivia explained that perceptions in the community have changed. In discussing community-university partnerships, Olivia said she thinks they are "a great idea…and I think [the DDCE] has done a really good job of

reaching out to the community because UT for a long time was very insular." When it came to the African American community, Olivia has seen the history of the community's interaction with the university as she came to Austin in 1980. During that time, the university was mistreating the community: "it was horrible how they treated that community. And that's not a good way to have neighbors that they were going to have to deal with." However, with the advent of the DDCE, Olivia has seen the way that the university has interacted with the community in a way that is respectful and meaningful.

The role of universities

Throughout the interviews, the participants indicated that they engaged with higher education institutions to further a goal or a cause that they have at a personal or organizational level. Through their experiences, the participants recounted what they gained by engaging with UT Austin specifically and higher education institutions in general. The expectations and realities differed based on each participant's specific goals; however, there was a common perception of what the role of universities should be in advancing community work and issues. Engaging with a higher education institution has benefits as well as issues for community partners. For the participants in this study, they, for the most part, acknowledged the benefits that engaging with the university has in terms of the reach and scope of the institution, the resources available, and having the right fit between the two entities. In addition, the participants all discussed how the DDCE affects their perceptions and experiences through their community-university partnership. Therefore, in this section the participants' commitment to a cause through the role of higher education institutions is examined.

A number of participants presented why they engage with universities in the first place. The reasoning for collaborating with a university came from the perspective of the participant's mission or work. Thomas saw the partnership with higher education as a way to align the academic and skilled elements to the business sector of the community. He explained that "universities are providing quality sets of hands in industry professions that we really need to do it, as well as the bringing in the latest academic research. I think it's a perfect, perfect fit." For his organization, creating community-university partnerships is a "big push for us as an organization. UT's been the big one." As a result, given the number of higher education institutions in the Austin area, Thomas explained his connections to the other institutions in addition to UT Austin as well as the various areas within UT Austin that his organization partners with on programs and initiatives.

Anne Hathaway also represents an organization that has many ties with various entities at UT Austin along with all the other higher education institutions in the greater Austin area. Although Anne Hathaway explained how his organization reaches out and works with these different actors in higher education to increase college enrollment, he lamented that more often than not, these partnerships were "not in a deep, sustained way." In discussing the myriad partnerships with UT Austin, Anne Hathaway expounded that, he hoped "they'll feel like they have gotten value out of the investment." At the same time, Anne Hathaway explained what role the university needs to play: "more students. More research opportunities. More funders." Yet it is the scope of the university that leads to a compatible partnership between his organization and the

institution: “there are things about the University of Texas, I mean it is the most important economic development engine that we have. It attracts a ton of talent that we like to keep here.” The university, as a result, complements the economic component of Anne Hathaway’s organization.

While Frank again indicated his uncertainty of working with higher education institutions initially to reach his goals, he did recognize the role that a university could and has played in his organization. In describing what the university has done for his organization, Frank explained that universities “help us get at crossroads, and we need that because humans need other humans to reinforce our values.” Since Frank has “always been about trying to educate our youth and trying to elevate their consciousness and their role in society,” higher education institutions are one out of many entities that can help with that endeavor. Frank’s passion of helping young Black children is something that he “will probably do that till I die, I don’t know why but it is in me and it has been in me…public school education has done so much for me personally…it is just part of my DNA now.” Overall, in order to further his goals, Frank recognized the power that a university like UT Austin could affect.

Diane continues to view the role of UT Austin through her lens as a student primarily. Having that intimate connection with the university has helped shape how Diane wants to see the university interact with its community. As an alumna, Diane communicated that “there is always a vision of academia and when students go into real life, what needs to happen. So there’s a lot of ideals there. There’s a lot of principles there.” Putting her undergraduate degree field into perspective, Diane stated, “my

education was based in the world of science, but it doesn't mean anything unless you actually apply it to the greater world." Through community engagement, higher education institutions can do just that by "having the university acknowledge that academics is not the only thing for students and for the university community." By connecting academics "with local communities, with local issues, then you can bring the real life aspect back to the academic world and give opportunities to students, and again, whether it's faculty and staff, to make things a little bit better." This, Diane believes, will lead to engagement at various levels:

> Not only just on the optimistic, futuristic, global scale, but more importantly in a much more local manner. You know, if you live here or if you're part of the University of Texas, then you are part of the Austin community.

Therefore, Diane viewed the role of UT Austin as "a place for us to practice our principles…when you have collaborations like this between community partners, grassroots community partners and a large university system, I think it allows both partners to practice their principles."

Similar to Diane, Beverly and Urfreetodream expressed their expectations of a university or college based on the needs and connections with the community. Beverly reasoned that "educational institutions sit in community and that there is a hope and I think a responsibility of–especially with public institutions with public money–that there would be some exchange of some sort resource between community and university." In reflecting on her own partnership, Beverly's engagement with the university, the DDCE, and its engagement center helped establish her organization, for what they "were able to provide was really helpful in starting this organization that I think will go on to do great

work in that community." For Urfreetodream, the university's strong connections with the city have led to certain expectations for engagement. She discussed:

> We are all college smart around here…it's that kind of engagement that you can do at any level; it has all the elements of being: it has color, something you can touch, something you can spread, [and] something you can feel. I mean it covers all the senses. And once all of that is covered, you feel energized.

Urfreetodream believed that that energy could help foster an environment in which her cause and others can be attained by collaborating with the higher education institutions in the area.

DDCE

Although not the focus of the study, all the participants discussed the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) with their community-university partnerships. As the partnerships originate from the division, it was expected that the participants interwove their experiences with their perspectives on DDCE. Often throughout their interviews, the participants would interchange DDCE for UT Austin; representing the community engagement arm of the university, it was not unfounded that the participants would see the DDCE as an extension of the entire university.

The participants first learned about the division through other community commitments or relationships they already had. Word of mouth was a common way that some of the participants heard about the DDCE or its leader, Dr. Vincent. Thomas explained that he "tripped on the division through some folks that came through our programs and said: you've got to talk to" the leadership in the division. Once his organization became involved in relevant issues that aligned with the division and a

DDCE leader came onto their board, "that's really where it's sort of taken off." A similar connection occurred for Katalina. She recounted, "I didn't hear about DDCE until I was at the Texas Exes Hispanic Alumni Network and somebody was saying Dr. Vincent… and the division of diversity." In addition, when Peter first arrived to Austin, a colleague told him about the division. While his organization had a partnership with DDCE previously, it was not as expansive as it is today. Peter narrated:

> When I landed, she said, you need to meet Dr. Vincent. I said, absolutely. When and where? I'm ready. I might not have had my personal living situation ready, but I was ready to meet with Dr. Vincent and the DDCE, and I was overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed with gratitude, as a Longhorn alum, it was a dream come true to be sitting there, actually working with the university that brought so much to my life - that changed my life. And then we talked about the possibilities. They saw really quickly the type of impact that we were going to have, the results that were being generated, the vision, the strategy, and the serving the constituency. And so that led to an increase in the partnership. It's been phenomenal.

The building of relationships is a common theme that the participants expressed in how they started interacting and collaborating with DDCE. Beverly first learned about the division while she was with a previous nonprofit. According to Beverly, "it really developed organically" through her interactions with DDCE staff. The same happened to other participants, including Cartwright through her interactions with DDCE in another organization she is affiliated with, and Diane, who learned about the division from a UT Austin professor.

Lee had an interesting connection to DDCE as his engagement with the university spans numerous decades, which includes the nascent diversity and community engagement efforts at UT Austin before the establishment of the DDCE. Lee related that when Dr. Vincent came to the university, he took over the fledging efforts and

institutionalized them: "he came over with the idea of community development…he was more open to the idea, so most of the people we had been talking to, the Blackland people and so forth, he got in touch with them." In addition to making needed relationships with the community, "he was able to ease some of the pressure and frustration that was going on because he really understood." Speaking on behalf of the East Austin community, Lee said this about the division: "the department seems to be more open to some of the things we have, concerns we have, and we're going to talk about it and take action in those areas."

Frank has had a similar experience to Lee in the sense that he saw the advent of the DDCE as a mechanism to address community concerns. Having come to Austin in the 80s, Frank's interactions with people in the community reflected a less than positive sentiment about the university; they "really didn't want to have anything to do with UT. Saw UT encroaching upon their land; saw UT as just not welcoming for people of color unless you were an athlete at that point." However, he recounted "that the creation of the DDCE really bridged the gap in community perception." The annual community leadership awards, the Greater Austin Area My Brother's Keeper initiatives, "which is a collaborative between the county, city, school districts, and DDCE," and his own organization being incubated by the division, Frank explained, are examples of the division "reaching out to the community. It wouldn't have happen[ed] if DDCE didn't exist."

Participants also remarked on the staff and team of the DDCE and their interactions with them. Starting at its core, Peter explained that the structure of the

division helped make his experience successful: "the team buys into the leadership structure there. I think in order for a department of that size that is so acclaimed with all the achievement and awards, there has to be an organizational structure." In describing how he saw the DDCE team further, Peter said, "the caliber of the talent, the dedication…going the extra mile is a standard, not an aspiration. So I'm just really grateful for the impact that's being generated" in the Greater Austin area and beyond through the reach of the DDCE. Diane echoed those sentiments by saying, "the representatives and the staffing of DDCE, you know, it really comes down to people, and there's good people within the division." When it comes to programmatic issues, Urfreetodream said that the DDCE team "are great and they make sure that it happens and they check: are you okay, did we get everything you all need?" In addition, Urfreetodream traced the history of the division stating, "well, the staff has grown. The reach has grown. The definition has changed. I think now they have figured out where they punch." Through the changes, she saw the division dealing with the questions of "what do we want to do here, and what is the legacy going to be when we are finished…I think it has a lot to do with the, not necessarily personality, but the practices of the leadership." Beverly discussed a specific area in the division, the community engagement center located in East Austin and how it helped her organization as well as her perception of what the DDCE could accomplish.

> That was the one that I think that the center really provided in that span of time was that support they gave, was given directly to the work. Whether it was providing interns for events or providing space for small groups. The groups they provided space for were groups that were advocating for social change. It was about social justice, it was not just about a small group. And the groups that they

> incubated really went on to do extraordinary things….So it was a hub, and I think that it provided a real service.

Beverly indicated that this center "was really a great way to make connections, have community coming in and out." Overall, the participants who discussed the DDCE had similar sentiments to how Servant described the division as it "exposes us to a plethora of other resources…[and it] has put another face on the university system that didn't exist."

The Effect of Context

Context played an important role in how the participants saw their causes being accomplished as well as how they could engage with their various communities. Austin as a city, the University of Texas at Austin, and even today's political and social contexts came up during the interviews with the participants. As a result, how community engagement manifested for the participants was greatly shaped by the different contexts that the participants experienced.

Austin

All participants discussed Austin as an area in which to engage with the greater community. A number of the participants saw themselves as true Austinites, and despite those who have been here for a short while, they still described the strong connections they felt to the city and their communities. While many of the participants indicated their appreciation for Austin, seven of the participants specifically described their love for Austin. Urfreetodream reflected on the various things she loves about Austin and "what we do for our community." Thomas said that he "loves the freedom and the openness and acceptance that happens in Austin that you just don't see in a lot of other places. I

feel we are a little bit more about relationships and accepting where people are at." Frank talked about what his organization can do for Austin's citizens: "hopefully our goal is to make sure that all citizens of Austin feel appreciated, respected, and are treated with equity, especially by law enforcement." For Frank, his work is rewarding to him because it is located in Austin. He explained that "I'm glad to do it, because I love Austin; I think Austin is great." In addition, Katalina connected her love of Austin to its connection with the university:

> I always call Austin, we're like a throbbing heart, which I love about being in Austin. We're just open and love and harmony, awareness, intellect everywhere. I said we're the friendliest city in the world. Pet friendly, homeless friendly, everything you can imagine. It's the greatest city in the world to me. I love being in Austin. I'm very proud of that. And part of that of course are the relations being with the University of Texas.

More than their affection for the city, the participants recognized the role that the city can play in creating change through different causes. Peter posited that "Austin is a very dynamic and unique place in the country, and so we have a really huge opportunity here to represent the fastest-growing demographic overall in the area and in the country."

Other participants also shared their perceptions about the city. Frank, in discussing his organization's work with the local law enforcement to make changes for young men of color, indicated that Austin is a prime location to address these issues. He said, "Austin is at a great point of intervention because I don't think we have the major issues of other cities around the country having with law enforcement." Since "it is important to get ahead of it, instead of behind it," Frank described that as a city, "we are starting to do more community-based things" to address these issues. Olivia also sees the

role that Austin can play because "Austin is very different, I think, than other cities." However, she cautioned that "we have so many nonprofits that just come up and flourish for a minute, but I think just to keep the eyes and ears open for new ways to connect with people, with the different communities that Austin has." In addition, Cartwright indicated that "Austin is still, it's not segregated, but it is becoming re-segregated with gentrification. Nobody's talking about it." She recommended that more needs to be done to deal with the effects of gentrification, especially for the East Austin community.

UT Austin's History in Austin

When it came to discussing their community-university partnerships, the participants' cognition of the university's standing and history in the city were important. Even if the history of the university did not directly affect the partnership, the history often impacted the participants' perspectives or personal experiences with UT Austin. However, regardless of the positive or negative views of the institution, the participants recognized the role of the university within the Austin community. From Sara explaining that "UT is the fabric of this community" to Diane stating that "UT's part of the local community," as a higher education institution that grew parallel to the city of Austin, the actions of both are often intertwined. Olivia framed the connection that "the university is a big part of the city of Austin. It has a big footprint." Lee described it further: "the University of Texas is larger than the city of Austin." It also has a long history in the city.

Having been in Austin for a long time, Lee was involved with a number of community efforts that dealt with the university when it was less than hospitable to

communities of color, especially those in East Austin. Before the creation of the DDCE, "the university was not committed really to East Austin." Recounting the land acquisition attempt by the university in the Blackland area, Lee described how the community, the city, and the university played important roles in the changes in East Austin:

> This city has community associations all over town and those were the first people who had the option and the responsibility to communicate to the University of Texas and the City of Austin. The City of Austin recognized those people, but UT didn't necessarily recognize them. So we had to communicate with the City of Austin and have them negotiate with the University of Texas to slow it down... In order to get their attention, you had to have a neighborhood association. They formed the Blackland Association and they still work with the University of Texas, trying to have some say-so with what happens there. Because with that organization and the city stepping in and working with the University of Texas. But that's what happened, and so actually the university started working with the Blackland association and they said okay, we will slow down, and we will only take the land we need when we need it.

This was one example of how the university affected the East Austin area; however, Lee reflected that the East Austin community has been "working with the University before the name DDCE came in." It was after the DDCE started that Lee began to see more benefit for East Austin; "one benefit for the community is that they've been able to get more cooperation from the university."

Lee used the Precursors–the group of the first African American students to enroll at UT Austin after integration–as an example to show the changes that have happened at the university through the division. He stated: "I don't think this precursor's program would become as effective as it is now without the system from that department." Although the Precursors had been a cause "for years and years, that program that people

would talk about it, it was here, but now they've woven it into an integral part." With the establishment of the organization for the Precursors, Lee explained that:

> I think that helps a lot when people go back and finally recognize those students that crossed the threshold the first time made a tremendous sacrifice to go over there because they were not welcome on the campus. They couldn't live in the dormitories. They couldn't eat in the cafeteria. They couldn't eat on the Drag. They couldn't go to the movies. So coming back finally after all these years and recognizing the students who went there and went through all of the hassle that they went through paved the way for students now. It is an open university now, but it wasn't always that way.

Frank also mentioned the Precursors and the reflection of improvements in the university. He said "I do know that the Precursors coming to campus now, people cannot say we haven't reached out to the community."

As is the case with many participants, Frank was cognizant of the role the university has played in communities of color. He pointed out that "the history of UT concerning its treatment of people of color is abysmal and deplorable." According to Frank, it is through leadership that redressing these wrongs can occur: "it takes strong leadership to not only try to flip those perceptions but put systems in place to continue to fight against those perceptions and misperceptions and to fight against that history." However, Frank lamented that "as a country we are ambivalent towards that history and today's society." Although the university has been more effective in reaching out to communities of color in recent years, more needs to be done:

> Because of the historical disconnect between this institution and the people of color, in my opinion, the university has to continue to go above and beyond to make sure those perceptions are changed and those manifestations are changed to be a leader in this country to show everyone in the country, in higher ed, and in the broader community, that this institution is on the right side of the moral

> compass. It is going to take strong leadership to do that, but if any university can do it, it would be UT Austin.

While Frank had an optimistic view of the university's position in changing perceptions, not everyone shared his sentiments.

Olivia believes that the university is still "a very insular organization." She explained that although she attended UT Austin as a graduate student, her perception is different than that shared by those who went to the university as undergraduates. While Olivia is "very appreciative of what UT did for me as law school," this "different relationship" that she had also allowed her to see how the university has ill-treated the African American community in Austin. Olivia further elucidated her position: "because of how it's affected your community or affected your family or…did not basically put out a good message, then I think you would have a negative impression of how UT affects you." Olivia acknowledged that after the creation of the DDCE, the university is "trying to do better," but the many years where there "was not a lot of institutionalized efforts that then helped over the long term" continue to affect perceptions in the community.

Cartwright, a UT Austin undergraduate alumna, also shared her thoughts on the university's historical stance in the African American community. Speaking on how her interactions with the university through her community-university partnership have changed her opinion about her alma mater:

> It was never bad, but there were situations that happened when I was at school. There were things that happened to my classmates, so it's a reminder that the bastions of racism, or the bastions of classism and sexism still exist. But UT has evolved.

That evolvement has made Cartwright proud of her university, especially as she sees students more active and aware of their environments. As a student, her classmates and she were aware of the issues, but "we were so focused on reaching the goal of getting our degrees, it's like keep your head down, get the hell what you need out of UT and then keep on stepping." Speaking about students at UT Austin today, Cartwright stated, "I'm very proud that the young people's consciousness has been raised to act. To participate more and look at what the world is going through. Because this is a global community."

Although many of the participants recognized the history of the university within the context of the city of Austin, both Thomas and Nathan recommended the need for the university as well as the city to acknowledge that history. Thomas made the argument that "I think they could be a little bit more open about where the tension between the University is and East Austin. I think they could be more of a placeholder of the history." Nathan echoed the role of UT Austin in disclosing the history: "make things right and publicize that history, even if we still don't always agree on what we should do." He explained that from the alumni's perspective, "they at least believe that the university is attempting to make the right effort."

Today's Context

All of the interviews occurred after the results of the 2016 presidential elections. In fact, the first two interviews happened the Wednesday after the election results were announced, and Donald Trump became president-elect of the United States. As has been shown, community engagement does not work in a vacuum, and the current context and climate play a significant role in how the participants have engaged with the community

throughout their careers. Some alluded to the current political climate of our country, like Sara who mentioned, "feeling very full of identities as of last week." However, for the most part, the participants who brought up this issue expressed the need for more engagement, either in general or in specific areas, because of the presidential election.

Frank, my first interview for this study, and the interview that occurred on Wednesday morning after the elections said:

> With yesterday's election results, no matter what side you are on, if you have half a brain you realize that this country in 2016 is so divided socially, racially, philosophically that true leadership is needed in this country, and it's up to the people of local communities to provide that modeling and leadership to the folks in the community….I think grassroots efforts and true leadership and teaching and modeling character and respect for other people, holding yourself to higher principles and hard work is what we have to get to eventually.

While other participants mentioned their worry over the results of the election, Frank was more optimistic and interested in what was to come. Peter also discussed the national discord and was much less hopeful than Frank was: "this country is so divisive right now. I mean, it is frightening, about some of the positions that are out there–and I'm not talking politically, I'm just talking overall." Peter's interview took place at the beginning of February 2017.

Some of the participants offered suggestions of what needs to be done by the university or in general, to address some of the issues that arose during the election. Olivia brought up the election in terms of what needs to be done next, especially for race and gender. She expounded that "after this election, I think it shows the need to keep up the discussion about race, and now I think women are realizing that they have a lot of work to do." She further posited, "unfortunately right now in our society with everything

that's going on with race, it is an important Department that needs to stay." When I asked Sara about what UT Austin or DDCE should continue doing to increase community-university partnerships, she indicated that:

> There are a lot of opportunities right now given the current political climate. As academics, at a huge higher education, as an anchor institution in our community, really taking a lead in offering sanctuary and safety and information to all of the organizations in our community they're trying to heal and keep people safe.

In addition, Sara said "that something we're learning about, from last week, is how academic elitism plays out in our politics, so it's a fine line to figure out where and how to assist a problem like gentrification." For Cartwright, she was appreciative of the students' part in addressing issues by demonstrating and being active citizens. Talking about how all students, "Black, White, and Brown" are being more engaged, Cartwright explained: "kids are demonstrating saying: hey, we are not happy with this. So they're very involved, and there is an awareness with the young people realizing oh, something really happened to our country on Tuesday." Cartwright concluded by stating that "we have returned to an ugly place in history. But I'm proud of what the kids are doing."

BEYOND ONESELF

When it came to making meaning of their experiences as a community agent in a community-university partnership, the participants all exhibited the common theme of working *Beyond Oneself*. This is because of a bigger calling to do community engagement work, which should be a result of purposeful engagement for creating change. Most of the participants indicated that this community-university partnership is just one mechanism through which they engage with their communities, however they

may define them. The participants, as a result, described their experiences as a composition of all the community engagement they are involved in given the complementary nature of the work. The partnerships and relationships that the participants have forged have been to further causes, be they related to a personal or organizational mission, within the community. In addition, the community-university partnership with the DDCE often led to other interactions through programs and initiatives at the university or was a result of other engagement already established with the university in different areas. As a result, the composite theme for research question two, about how community agents make meaning of their experience in a community-university partnership, is *Beyond Oneself*. While their personal views and experiences shaped how they engaged with the community through community-university partnership, the overall purpose of their engagement was to accomplish goals that were beyond the person's own self.

In line with this composite theme is how the community agents rationalized their want to engage and the purpose of doing so. Not one participant indicated that this work was easy or could produce results quickly, rather that it was their values and drive to engage with their communities. For instance, Thomas explained that a key part of being a community partner is:

> Taking personal responsibility in how I engage in the community. That is as simple as knowing when not to push my values onto someone else who may disagree, engage with others in the community who don't have my same life experiences and listen to their truths, not overlay my experiences on them.

As Sara stated, "being flexible and being passionate and being willing to speak out or speak up or ask for assistance" are needed in community engagement work. Moreover, Frank described that the work entailed "staying true to the organization, regardless of what is going on, knowing that sometimes there is pain when you are trying to grow, and pain when you are just trying to sustain."

In addition, how the participants saw engagement was in context of what the partnership could result in for the benefit of the community. Urfreetodream summed up the expectation of working with a partner that "as part of that community engagement and part of that reciprocity… you also have to be willing to acknowledge the gift back and be a part of it." The creation of DDCE was seen for the most part as an advantage to the university in addressing historical issues that the university has had in the city and the community. DDCE was seen as a conduit to the university as a whole and to the outer community. As a result, many of the participants saw where the DDCE, as well as the university, should continue reaching out to the community. Nathan made the recommendation that:

> The place where DDCE can work most closely with the community is really making sure that the diversity is more than just a question of our incoming students. It is a thing that ties the university to Austin and to the rest of the world. I think what DDCE should continue to do is look for partners in the community outside of the university who share the interest, who would be able to connect the university.

Again, the participants discussed these points within the framework of how these elements have affected communities, especially communities of color in Austin. While the longstanding history of the university did not affect the partnership, it directly

influenced some participants in creating change in the community. Peter summed it up by saying, "make sure that the community knows that we're serving our community, that we're staying mission-central, and that we're creating an impact."

Research Question Three: Connection of Experiences and Definition

Building upon the participants' definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity with their experiences in community engagement through community-university partnerships, research question three asked: how do community agents' experiences connect to their definition of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships? Within this phenomenological study, the participants' interviews, questionnaire responses, and any documents provided helped to create rich descriptions that have led to a textural, structural, and composite theme for research question three, as depicted in Figure 5.3.

The commonalities between the participants in this research question were on how the participants applied their understandings and beliefs towards mutual benefit and reciprocity within community-university partnerships. These commonalties centered on the participants' expectations and intentionality of the partnership they had with the university. As such, the textural descriptor of *Support and Sustainability* shows the expectations that the participants described in terms of what they saw as the role of the university, their organization or themselves, and what they required from the university. Since the partners saw the support needed within the context of their cause, personal or organization mission, the structural descriptor for research question three is *Needs and*

Connections. This descriptor shows how the participants incorporated their definitions within the intentionality of their community-university partnerships. Through the framework of community-university partnerships, the participants described how mutual benefit and reciprocity were incorporated within the partnerships they have experienced. As a result, the composite theme of this research question is *Purposeful Partnering* as it combines the expectations of a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship with the intentionality of the partnership with a higher education institution.

Table 5.3

Research Question Three Descriptors and Theme

	Textural Descriptor	**Structural Descriptor**
How do community agents' experiences connect to their definition of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships?	Support and Sustainability	Needs and Connections
Composite Theme	Purposeful Partnering	

SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY

As the participants indicated, community-university partnerships were part of the larger purpose of their community engagement work. Although this partnership was seen as one way to achieve a larger cause, the participants recognized what they needed from the partnership at different levels in order for it to be mutually beneficial and reciprocal. The connections that the participants made between their definitions and their expectations led them to discuss the support and sustainability that they wanted to gain from their partnerships with the DDCE and the university. For the participants, this was

expressed in what they wanted the university to provide to the partnership, what they saw their role as the community partner included, and why sustainability was beneficial not only to their community causes but also to themselves and the university.

Role of the University

As community agents, the participants recognized the role that a university could play in community issues. The expectations of the partnership ranged based on the overall goal of the individual community partner; however, the participants indicated that, for the most part, they wanted the university to play a supporting role in their endeavors by being a convener, providing resources, and thus using its power and connections to further the community partners' causes. Even though the reality of the partnership might not have fully met the expectations of every participant, at their bases, the partnerships were created for a purpose that the community agents were committed to. It was through recognizing the roles that the university had within the partnerships that the participants saw how mutual benefit and reciprocity did or did not occur.

The role of the DDCE or the university as a convener was brought up by some of the participants both in the sense of convening on and off the campus. This included bringing the academic side of higher education to the community as well as bringing together different sectors of the Austin community together. For instance, Beverly, in reflecting on her past partnership, discussed what the hope had been for her community organization in partnering with the DDCE. She said, "really what we wanted from DDCE was to be a convener: to bring together the [organization] and the different academic departments at UT to say: hey, we are here; we can do this work; how can we

work together." However, Beverly clarified that this never happened within her partnership and was a motivating reason as to why the partnership ended. Sara also discussed the DDCE as a convener within the scope of the campaign she runs. Speaking about connecting local charities with the university's charitable campaign, she stated that "to connect people it definitely shouldn't be…in a vacuum." By partnering with the division to convene local charities on campus, Sara described that "is also a mutually beneficial opportunity for the donors to meet charities and find out where your money goes to the community and what it does."

Olivia's standpoint on the DDCE as a convener is with different communities in the city. She suggested: as a city, "we're kind of segregated - although we try not to be. I think DDCE tries to do that but just make sure that the communities are cross pollinating….I think DDCE can be a really good way for people to come together." Cartwright also mentioned bringing different areas of Austin together through the DDCE but conceded, "such a division, which is designed to reach out, everything has to be strategic, so you don't offend somebody." Thomas, in addition, mentioned convening in respect to both his organization as well as his partners: "we really believe more importantly than trying to do it by ourselves; it is showing the community that you can convene with other people and advance things together. This by ourselves stuff is just not sustainable long-term."

Some participants indicated that they felt the DDCE and the university should provide more access to their partners by making connections within and outside of the division that could help their community organization. Nathan wanted to see his

organization "be more involved from a listening and observing standpoint, so that we are aware of where we can help because I think we have a lot of overlapping goals." He indicated that for his organization, "we would like to know what DDCE is doing and would like our volunteers to be included in that partnership." For Nathan, this was about transparency from both sides of the partnership. He wanted his organization and its members to have "more access to community initiatives from DDCE, so that if the DDCE is going to hold community events in an area, our volunteers would be certainly invited or at least informed those would be taking place." Katalina remarked on a similar approach: "just engage in conversation, discuss what's going on, what events are happening. What's in the pipeline? And just build that relationship to further foster it so we start to engage more closely together." In looking at the university as a whole, Thomas stated that "as big and as large of a behemoth that it is, I still believe that within the city of Austin, it's still underutilized." Beverly would have agreed with Thomas' assessment since her recommendation was to see the division be "more proactive in grassroots and in connecting the academy to the community and helping to support those efforts…at the level of really figuring out how to bring resources and ideas into the community."

For other participants, the university and the division were viewed within the context of a resource provider. Resources meant different things to the participants based on the support they were seeking from the partnership. Frank admitted that without the financial support to his organization, it would not be where it is today and move from an incubator program to a freestanding entity. He reflected, "the fact that we have had

constant support, monetarily, has helped sustain us and so it has gotten to a point where we think we are ready to mature and break off." Because of the support his organization has received, Frank also recognized the mutual benefit the partnership has for the university as well:

> Because of the university, you have an organization that is geared towards helping a population that has historically been disenfranchised and underrepresented, and with the direct support from this university, we are trying to do something about that. We would want the university to continue its support, and not only continue supporting us but find other entities like us and supporting them as well.

He further pronounced that "UT is a resource, a great resource, and the reciprocity comes in in helping people grow up and an organization grow up."

Ricky detailed how the DDCE has provided resources to his organization, including making university spaces available to his students: "DDCE has so much access to financial resources and privileges within UT to reserve space and things like that, and from my experience, it has been a really great ally." Since Ricky represents an organization that has a symbiotic relationship with the DDCE as well as a school that partners with the division and the university, he has a unique view on the role of the university in his partnership: "we've been able to use our positioning within the university as a resource for the community." As a result, for the most part, "UT has just been a resource for me. It's been a place that I can reach out to if I need help."

Diane also expanded on the types of resources that she has been able to gain by partnering with a higher education institution. In addition to monetary resources, the university has been "a great place for us to access resources." Diane related that "having these partnerships where we can access the libraries and the archives and the latest

studies, and be able to connect with individuals within the universities and the system…it gives us the necessary tools." Reiterating the effect of research in its benefit to the university as well, Peter identified that "it's really, really important that we plug into the resources and that we help with any research, which is so critical in distinguishing the institutions of higher learning from each other and in terms of longevity."

The participants also recognized the power that the university and division had within the partnerships. Although most participants saw no power imbalance within their partnership, a few of the participants gave an indication about power struggles that often led to a feeling of one-sidedness within the relationship. Given that Frank's organization is an incubator program within the DDCE, he saw that "we have been treated like a child, and now it is just time for us to grow up and hopefully that balance of power will even out this year and move more towards the organization." Diane indicated the power imbalance in her partnership came from her organization being "the one asking all the time," which negates mutual benefit and reciprocity within the partnership. Nathan saw a power imbalance with the university more so than the division since the information that his organization oversees is "at the whim" of the university's decisions. Expanding on that, Nathan said: "what the university decides, we have to champion. It's very one sided from that sense." In addition, this one sided view was apparent in Anne Hathaway's description. He discussed that although the university does not rely on his organization per se, "we still have their engagement, but it has been more of an intrinsic benefit to them than it has been a financial imperative to be involved." Sara also pondered the issue of power imbalances by asserting, "I don't know if one of us is more or less

powerful…we just have different needs and it's just trying to negotiate that." Whereas, Ricky suggested that "there's a big responsibility on the side that has the most power in that situation to make sure that they're not stepping on anyone's toes and not changing the community in ways that they're not realizing."

In addition to power within the partnership, the participants indicated the power that resulted from the partnership in terms of reach and scope. This was often in conjunction with the participants' personal views about the university or the division. For example, Sara mentioned that "I'm proud to be at UT alum. I don't care a single thing about football. I do care about my university. Particularly, I really care about is the academics, and the role it's playing in the community." Representing his organization, Frank justified working with the university since "we look upon UT as a power source and as a benefit, especially to young guys who look like us." Moreover, Frank remarked that "the university is a powerful university, in terms of resources and finance, and I think it is incumbent upon the flagship to do what it is doing in terms of reaching out." By partnering with the division, Nathan found that it helped the alumni population he works with to form better perceptions of the university as a whole. He added, "the partnership has been phenomenal in terms of giving our alumni a reason to be proud and come back and also engaging them in a way that keeps them interested in the university."

Even the brand of The University of Texas at Austin was a significant factor in why some participants engaged with the university. The brand's reach even internationally was commented on by a few of the participants such as Katalina. She pronounced that "UT is so incredible of a higher learning institution. It truly is an

international brand in itself." Frank echoed that description: "UT is a powerful brand internationally….The Longhorn is known all over the world and politically, it would just be intelligent and smart to have an affiliation with DDCE" through his partnership.

Role of the Community Partner

Similar to how the participants had expectations of the role of the university and DDCE, the participants also indicated what they expected from themselves and their organizations as a community partner. The participants saw that they could be conduits and resources between the university and the community at large. Although the participants came from various organizational backgrounds, they all shared how they could be influential in mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnerships with higher education institutions.

Representing the community was not only in the mission of all the organizations the participants represented, but also in the way the participants discussed their community engagement work. This in turn influenced the partnership they had with the university or the division. Thomas revealed that through his organization, "we are here most importantly to build relationships with circles of influence that may not interact on a day to day basis." As a result, building relationships was an important element to representing the community. Olivia detailed how the university program she is involved in has built stronger relationships with another higher education institution in the Austin area, especially "because there used to be not a lot of collaboration between those two schools." Diane saw the scope of the university in terms of how it inherently is connected with the community. By partnering with the university, Diane theorized: "It

gives us outlets. The University of Texas is large. It's a huge community and I think that having these partnerships, we're doing what we're supposed to be doing, anyways." Diane stipulated that "UT is not this separate planet that we're reaching out to. It's in our community," and by creating relationships with the university, her organization are able to "expand our reach, and it raises awareness for our agency." At the same time, as a community partner, "we also can definitely help provide a better understanding of what's happening within the community. All of the intersectional issues that affect the communities here and that I'm pretty sure affect a portion of the student population."

Urfreetodream considered relationships in how she viewed community partners working with higher education institutions. In giving advice**,** theoretically, to a community organization looking to engage with the DDCE, she illustrated:

> Decide how you want to have a relationship. You can have a relationship as quick and to the point, or you can have a relationship that is really engaging. I think that is why they call it community engagement; we don't want any drive-bys….You really have to know your goal for anything. When you start talking about a relationship, you have to know that in that relationship you have to give, but you have to know what the goal is.

Urfreetodream discussed how creating relationships "touches every life." Especially when an organization represents a community of people who have gone through difficult times, sometimes, they might feel hesitant to share their experiences. However, "when you get together a group of people you know they have a common thread and you have an opportunity to elevate them, that thread is where you can engage."

As Urfreetodream indicated, the community partner can serve as a resource to the university, just as the university can be a resource to an organization. Engaging with the

community, Urfreetodream noted, gives the university "more of a reach. The thing about an organization being involved, it is not so much the money as it is them telling someone else," and thus extending the reach of both parties involved. Thomas made a similar point about expanding the scope, especially for the university in his case. Through his various connections within the university, Thomas observed, "I think UT is stronger overall because we have so many different outlets in all those places." Lee put it simply when he described his organization by saying: "I think I had a business or organization that they feel could be supportive of their efforts. That's why they even looked at it in the first place." Diane also discussed how community organizations could be resources especially to academic institutions. She justified that "it goes back to the philosophy that education is just not from books. It should come from real life. And a lot of organizations hold valuable information about the communities that they serve." In addition to the resource that the university provided Diane's organization, she described what the mutual benefit was for the university through the resource her organization provided: "we are providing support to students at the university, not only in direct services. We do have a lot of UT students that seek our services, and also we do a lot of community education on campus."

In Beverly's experience, it was the lack of acknowledging her organization as a community resource that she felt led to the end of her partnership with the university and DDCE. She expounded, "there may be acknowledgement that there is a community in need, but not that the community itself is a resource." Beverly found that to be true particularly for small organizations when they collaborate with large entities such as

higher education institutions. Beverly considered that this could lead to "no reciprocity in the collaboration, in the building of the partnership." As a result, Beverly commented, "I think that the university could have used us more," in terms of being a resource, "and so it made it feel like oh, this is only a one-way street but it isn't."

According to the participants, there are a number of skills necessary to effectively engage with the university. This ranged from being organized and sharing information about the organization, as Cartwright recommended, to being open-minded as Lee advocated, and to making connections that can help a larger constituent. Ricky indicated that he "has been able to connect students and families at my school to other resources at UT." Katalina explained that having a consistent message is important especially given "we do so much, and we only have so many hours in the day. You've got to prioritize what you want to talk about and what you want to make a difference in." One of the biggest lessons Beverly received by engaging with a higher education institution is the difference between academia and community perspectives. She stressed that:

> When I started this, I didn't have the understanding nor the ability to articulate really what is the academic track and what is the community track, and they are really quite different. I think that we really have to work hard to show the academics where they can connect with the community and why.

However, Beverly mentioned that "there are some academics that already know that and already do that work…it is easier to make that connection with them."

In addition, Peter felt that the role of his community organization in a partnership with the DDCE was about being a conduit and spokesperson for his institutional partner. He reflected that since "it's sometimes hard for university organizations to beat their

chests in terms of what they're doing," it was up to partners, such as his organization, to be the ones to do so. Given that "the DDCE, for instance, is doing so much quality work, work that should be highlighted, that should be celebrated and championed," this is a role that the community partner should be willing to do and vice versa. This was made more significant to Peter because he had recently been recognized with a community leadership award by the division that left him feeling humbled as well as "overwhelmed. It was something that I couldn't grasp." Therefore, Peter indicated that for his organization, "we want to be able to champion those moments" about their university partners. Although Peter cautioned that sometimes the community assumes this to be grandstanding by an organization, "it's so great for another organization to lift up another, and so we want to do that." Overall, Peter described that "there's a natural synergy there that has to do with the sustainability of both entities…it's absolutely critical that we are there for each other from now forward."

NEEDS AND CONNECTIONS

As the participants shared commonalties in what they saw with the support and sustainability of their community-university partnerships from both the university and community side, how they connected their definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity with their experiences in community-university partnerships led to a structural descriptor of *Needs and Connections*. Moving beyond recognizing what the partnership should entail is how that translates into the needs and potential connections of the partnership from the perspective of the community agents. As a result, the structural descriptor for question three shows how the participants viewed mutual benefit and reciprocity within

their experiences of community engagement through community-university partnerships. The differing backgrounds and perspectives of the participants helped them to see their community-university partnerships through the scope of their definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity. More so than simply seeing a connection between definition and experience, the participants delineated their expectations of such community-university partnerships.

Alignment and Fit

While the participants discussed their personal missions and goals, they also discussed the alignment that needs to occur between the two partners within the community-university partnership. Peter reported that his community-university partnership embodies the idea of alignment for collective impact. He explained that both the DDCE and his organization "align squarely with shared values, which results in a partnership with a purpose. We share a quest for excellence, as embodied in our mission and vision statements." More than alignment on paper, Peter illustrated that it was through the actions of both that mutual benefit and reciprocity could be attained in the partnership. Citing the "talent of the DDCE in terms of the team," Peter reasoned that with that talent, the DDCE was "able to bring that talent to their esteemed partners." This, in turn, showcased the reciprocity that Peter felt was an important element in his partnership because his organization was able to "extend the brand messaging of the DDCE."

In order for reciprocity and mutual benefit to prosper in his partnership, Peter explained that it often came down to communication and stewardship. Since he "wanted

to make sure that it was just not a one-and-done" partnership but rather "a full year of engagement [with] multiple touch points," Peter described the planning that first went into the partnership, so that both sides understood the goals and missions of the other. Leveling the playing field aligned well with both of the organizations' missions. Given that compatibility, Peter discussed that his organization wanted to make sure that they could answer: "how could we help make sure that we embody and transmit the message to the community at large…and through this partnership and through this investment, how were we going to extend that brand messaging?" Using a city and county collaboration as an example of how both the DDCE and Peter's organization are working together, he detailed that "our teams are honed into the mission. We're hustling hard. We're doing so much. Our agendas are chock-full. But that's the kind of commitment and loyalty that we have for the mission and vision of our departments."

An underpinning of Peter's discussion on alignment was the relationship aspect of the partnership, and with a relationship, the concept of fit is significant. Peter recommended that for other community organizations looking towards a university partnership, they should "understand where [the university is] coming from. And further, is there a legitimate fit in terms of what you're trying to accomplish and what they're doing." He cautioned that "if there is a fit, then please exercise patience, build a relationship" as a way to find the alignment within a potential partnership. Overall for Peter and his organization, "this relationship helps get underrepresented communities to the table: to the table where decisions are being made."

Thomas also discussed the role of fit in his partnership with the university and the division. For Thomas, it all came down to his point of "I think it's critical that everyone does these university partnerships." Therefore, finding the fit was a necessity for Thomas, so that the partnership could be beneficial for both entities. Although Thomas sees his partnership with the DDCE as still forming, he understands how fit could help sustain long-standing engagement. Moving forward, Thomas stated, "we would like to see us start codifying something more and see where it fits…I absolutely know where it fits for us. I just don't want to impede on something that may not fit for" the DDCE. In terms of mutual benefit, Thomas recognized the benefit of the reach of his organization and the university: "when you look at our network, if there are gaps that [the] university feels it has or holes in their portfolio, I don't think any partner on either side should be shy about saying: I need help in this sector." Thomas is optimistic about expanding his partnerships with DDCE and the university because he has done so in the past and continues to work with other higher education institutions to create aligned goals. In addition, he appreciates that both sides of the partnership are "very open to shaping and forming what we think is right for both sides" without dealing with power struggles "mostly because of the clarity of leveraging together without overcompensating." Thomas rationalized his working with university partners as a way of enhancing innovation in community work. He concluded, "innovation is working within existing systems to make those changes. That's what's harder, and the more we strengthen that muscle with everybody, the better off we are."

Beverly also acknowledged the importance of alignment in a community-university partnership. Having successful and unsuccessful partnerships with higher education institutions and in the community, including the one with the division, shaped her perspective. Beverly gave the following recommendation to community organizations looking to create partnerships: "be clear about what it is they want from that partnership. And part of being clear is to know if they would be able to get that." Beverly found this advice to be true "about every partnership. I don't think that UT and DDCE are any different than an arts organization trying to collaborate on a project." Having clear goals and finding the connection with a university partnership are necessities in community work; therefore, Beverly stipulated, "you always have to be clear about what your goals are and if they are actually attainable." In addition to knowing the goals, the alignment of missions is an important consideration. Compatibility of missions can lead to community-university partnerships with "the community and the academy adhering to their mission and seeing how their missions can support each other."

Consequently, Beverly saw the alignment between the university and her organization, but it did not come to fruition from her perspective. She expounded on her position:

> What we as community organizers have to offer [the] university is practical experiences around the theories that developed at the academy. I think that a great relationship would be: here's the theory, now let's see how it works in the world. Or, this is what we are experiencing, how can you codify that to develop a model or thought-process? So it becomes mutual when each has a certain resource to provide. What comes out of that should be something of greater magnitude that couldn't have happened in individual silos.

For Beverly, that alignment of purpose could have resulted in a mutual beneficial partnership, but the lack of "an academic imperative" from the university partner was the failing in her partnership. Hence, community-university partnerships need to address the issue of "how do you provide knowledge to the community so it can progress, but how can the community take that knowledge and help your students progress?" Making connections between the academy and the community, according to Beverly, would create better alignment given the many areas in a university that a community organization could connect to but might not have the resources or staff to accomplish.

Reach and Impact

Some participants also discussed the reach and impact their community-university partnerships could have on different levels. By partnering with the university, Lee has been able to expand on a youth program that is near and dear to his heart and his community newspaper. In return, the DDCE benefits from the newspaper giving "coverage to all the activity that they're doing and trying to keep the community engagement with this community. Because we never had that before until Dr. Vincent came into town." In order for the impact of the partnership to continue as it has now for years, Lee discussed the importance of mutual benefit and reciprocity within the sustainability of the partnership. This includes "making sure that we keep it going and that it works for both of us. When they feel that we're not keeping our end, they let me know. When I think they aren't keeping their end up, I let them know." As other participants have indicated, community within the partnership is necessary for a strong

foundation. However, in order for a community-university partnership to be successful and impactful, the connection between the two parties needs to stay current. Lee advised:

> Once you hit the bump in the road when you no longer agree on the objective of what's going on, then you discontinue it. But as long as it's working, you want to make sure we are improving it and strengthening it and opening up new avenues.

Although the impact depends on the scope of the work, it makes the partnership no less important.

From Frank's perspective on incubator programs as community-university partnerships, he suggested that sustainability creates impact. Reciprocity comes into the equation because, according to Frank, "there should be some type of reciprocity for the good of the relationship, and perhaps an upfront time commitment on the organization's part, in order for everyone involved to know the endpoint." In order for both sides to see the viability in the partnership, Frank advocated that the community partner should "stay true to its mission," and the partnership itself should "have to effect a population that has been underrepresented, and it is going to have to be an outstanding plan." Through these incubators, Frank believed, the university and the DDCE could show mutual benefit: "if you can have a history of creating these initiatives, that try to enhance the local community and statewide if not national, nationwide, that is where the reciprocity comes in."

Urfreetodream also brought up the idea of impact in her community-university partnership. She identified that higher education institutions should continue to do work "that falls within your mission statement. As long as we fall within each other's mission statements, and you can get a deeper engagement, then do that." In addition, to keep that

engagement successful, she recommended addressing bad interactions that others might have experienced as a way to further engage. Urfreetodream asserted:

> The thing about a bad interaction is that you never know if it's the one person that had a bad experience and went back to the office and told everybody about it. I think as a community, we have to take that and use that information and not neglect it.

By doing so, she has been "more aware of opportunities that I can make a link to," which in turn can lead to reciprocity as well as expanding the partnership.

While Urfreetodream related the impact that her partnership with the DDCE has created for the community, she also distinguished where more impact could be created for the benefit of both partners. With impact, Urfreetodream discussed how the reach of the brand of the division is not as well-known as she would have expected it to be. She posited that, "I want the question to be: how does the part that reaches the community and has the most impact transfer into the part where everybody shows up?" She recommended that the "community arm at the university" has to engage with more well-known entities of the university, even athletics. This visibility is an important part of Urfreetodream's organization and partnership with other community entities and, thus, why she wanted to see the same for her university partner. She explained that the DDCE and the university's community efforts are "a message that nobody really gets unless you told them. Because of what we do for a living, we know them. But everybody doesn't know them."

Nathan identified the impact and reach a university could do not only as a partner in the community but for the benefit of the community overall. As such, Nathan stressed that:

> Universities, particularly public ones like UT Austin, are already embedded in their communities because they provide resources, jobs, and opportunities to the local population even if that population doesn't attend the school. I think it is necessary for public institutions to consider the impact their decisions and programming will have on that community, as well as to create programming or events that cater to that community's need.

Given the influence that a university entity can have, Nathan pointed out how a community-university partnership could utilize this to the community's advantage. Since Nathan works for an alumni organization, the line between the university and community is more blurred than in other community-university partnerships. In describing it as such, Nathan showed that not only does the relationship have mutual benefit, but there is also mutual dependence: "it's an existential relationship….We would not survive without that close relationship with the university. I think a lot of important university initiatives would not survive without that relationship with alumni." Thus, Nathan commented on the importance of "translating the university's goals and visions and DDCE's goals and visions to volunteers and alumni." This alignment sometimes proved difficult, as Nathan attested to in the recent 60th anniversary for the Precursors. He recounted that "it was very clear the university wanted to celebrate and make this a joyous occasion. A lot of our alumni did not necessarily feel that this was a celebration" given their experiences at the university. However, by working together through the partnership, Nathan was able to align the wishes of both the university and the alumni groups for the celebration.

Reflecting on how the partnership has evolved, Nathan explained that trust and transparency have been essential. In the three years that he has been representing the partnership, Nathan has seen an increase in the level of trust between the university and DDCE with his organization. He expounded, "not only do we have a better idea of what the programming is, I think we're proactively seeking the other out for: here's what we're thinking about, and do you have connections that would help facilitate this?" In terms of transparency, "we have gotten much better at not only making each side aware…we have gotten much better at sharing information." Yet, Nathan still believes that "both sides can do a better job of being transparent about events or programs or initiatives that each side would find valuable."

Intentionality

Intentionality was a common motivating factor in why the participants continued to engage in community engagement primarily and community-university partnerships. The purpose differed based on the goals and needs of the individual community partners. Nevertheless, those participants who discussed intentionality did so from the perspective that an objective would be achieved. Cartwright declared that "there must be an intentionality of purpose for both parties to work together. It cannot be artificial and serve to just give the public the impression that there is a relationship." Moreover, for intentionality to be realized, the community-university partnership should include "opportunities for both parties to intersect on a community, cultural, and educational level….The relationship should be long-term with short term projects to sustain the relationship and provide a variety of opportunities in which people can participate."

Sara viewed intentionality through how mutual benefit and reciprocity could be elements in the partnership. Her expectations of such a partnership were that "two (or more) sides of a partnership to have learned from one another and have developed a deeper understanding of where the other is coming from, in order to best accomplish the goals the partnership has set." Within her community-university partnership, she described the "definite connection and enthusiasm" from the university side. Although "it's a good relationship," she saw different ways in which her partnerships could move towards greater benefit and reciprocity. Accordingly, Sara suggested that a community-university partnership should entail the following elements: "listening and understanding, respect, encouragement, providing and acknowledging value in one another."

For Servant, intentionality of the partnership comes from the sustainability of it. By institutionalizing his organization's agendas, "the community will own that so if I drop today, there's going to be value in that journey of continuity." In addition to making sure that his organization is sustainable even if he were to leave, through his community-university partnership with the DDCE as well as other community partnerships, Servant is ensuring the longevity and investment in his organization. He explained that sometimes in community-university partnerships, one side is only seeking to "getting my needs met…and my need is only my need." However, that negates any chances of mutual benefit. Thus, there needs to be intentionality in how the partners come together and actualize what the needs are on both sides in order to address them. Servant expressed that regardless of the issues that may arise, "everything is about relationships.

And so what I do is just say, this is something that fits your mission and your vision, then let's marry. I don't want to date you."

In Diane's experience, intentionality within a community-university partnership is best accomplished when there are clear indications of what each side needs. This is necessary as Diana felt that "community engagement: it's not an extracurricular thing. It's essential. It's absolutely essential." Therefore, in looking at how her community-university partnership could be more purposeful, she imparted that "it comes back to perhaps an expanded role and more communication." Since Diane's organization represents a subset of the community, she stressed, "if there are any initiatives that are being planned, to make sure that we're at the table and that we're not a tokenized voice at the table." Having worked in a number of nonprofits, Diane's experiences in seeing where mutual benefit arises have much to do with delineating capacity and scope of both sides. She detailed that community organizations need to "understand what our limits are… what scope of services can be provided, [and] really look at what can be done strategically. Look at organizational capacity as well. I think those are the realistic things that need to be considered." For Diane, the intentionality of engagement needs to come from the community side, so that their goals and needs are realized:

> I think nonprofits need to be much more bold. I think a lot of nonprofits are willing to share or partner or try to recruit or do translations or whatever it is. But at the end of the day it comes down to, just to be blunt, it comes down to money. And making sure that their time is appropriately compensated. The other way around is a nonprofit needs to hold themselves accountable in terms of making sure that the primary partner has all the information that they need.

PURPOSEFUL PARTNERING

By identifying the support and sustainability as well as the needs and connections within community-university partnerships, the participants' experiences point to the composite theme of *Purposeful Partnering*. Partnering for the sake of partnering was not an issue for these participants. In their lived experiences of community engagement through community-university partnerships, working with higher education institutions was a means to an end and thus was seen as a way to reach towards personal or organizational goals. As a result, the participants discussed what their expectations and needs were from engaging specifically with higher education institutions. Research question three built upon the previous two research questions to ascertain how, if at all, the participants' experiences connected to their definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity. As a result, in the structural and textural descriptors, the two elements were described within a context of actual and expected, meaning that the participants were able to discern when mutual benefit and or reciprocity was present in their community-university partnership or how the elements could be implemented within their current or future partnerships with the university or DDCE. Therefore, the participants were willing to share what they believed the university's role was as compared to a community partner's role in community engagement. Regardless of focus, it all came down to having purposeful partnering, so that both the university and the community could reap benefits.

In order for the community-university partnership to be deemed as purposeful by the participants, there were different markers that the participants noted as indicators of

purposeful partnering. First, they explained how alignment and fit were significant for the effectiveness of the partnerships. Alignment rested on a number of factors, including: missions, goals, and values. The idea of fit was also important since the participants felt that without fit, there could be no impactful engagement. Once alignment or fit was established, the participants then looked to the partnership as a way to create reach and impact. The reach of the partnership could include different facets, but most of them were directed at increasing impact for the community that the participants served. The participants also looked at intentionality within the partnership to advance a collective impact. Examining the intentionality of the partnership allowed the participants to determine if and how mutual benefit and reciprocity could occur. Consequently, these indicators were a way for the participants to see the worth of their partnership and to see if they lived up to their definitions of mutual benefit, reciprocity, and even community engagement in general.

Almost all of the participants indicated that they had no formal plan or structure in place for their community-university partnership. Although that affected some of the partnerships, with a few participants remarking that next steps should include formalizing the community-university partnership in terms of goals and expectations, most participants saw this partnership as a relationship. Moving past a partnership to purposeful partnership included realizing the relationship aspect of the engagement. Participants remarked on the different levels of engagement that could occur within the partnership throughout its duration as well as how communication played a significant factor in building that partnership into a relationship. However, more than anything, the

participants wanted to see that partnering with the university and the division created an outlet to impact the greater good of the community and more often than not, this included seeing if there was a mutual benefit within the relationship.

Core Essence of Phenomenon

The three research questions in this study build upon one another. The data from the research questions also formed a composite theme in which the participants' experiences and voices were underscored. The first research question sought the definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity from the participants' perspectives as community agents in community-university partnerships. This led to a composite theme of *Interconnectedness of Mutual Benefit and Reciprocity*. In the second question, the participants described their participation in community-university partnerships as a way to advance a cause that related to a personal or organizational mission as being *Beyond Oneself*. Then in the third research question, which connected the first research question with the second, the participants described how their experiences are informed by their definitions of mutual benefit and reciprocity through *Purposeful Partnering*. Combining all three composite themes signify the core essence of this phenomenological study about community agents in a community-university partnership with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin. A phenomenological study appreciates not only the differing backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of a group of individuals with a common experience, but also the core essence that complements all of the participants.

Accordingly, the core essence of the study can be summed up as a *Belief and Commitment in Engagement for a Larger Good, Even Beyond the Community-University Partnership*. Even though most of the participants had community engagement as part of their job duty, all of the participants indicated that their involvement in community engagement through community-university partnerships went beyond a simple duty. It was often because of an intrinsic benefit to the community and an alignment to their personal mission or goal that these community agents set up a community-university partnership to further their objectives. Moreover, the participants' involvement in a community-university partnership was one part of how the participants saw their overall community engagement agenda. If partnering with a higher education institution could advance a purpose, then the participants saw the worth in doing so. Mutual benefit and reciprocity were important aspects of community-university partnerships, although differentiating these two elements was not as important to the participants as the benefits that could be gained from them. As a result, it all came down to purposeful partnering, so that the larger good could be actualized.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

Using a phenomenological approach, the previous chapter presented the themes and core essences of the lived experiences of the community agents who have a community-university partnership with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. By answering the three research questions that guided this study, a more robust understanding of how community agents define the core elements of mutual benefit and reciprocity, make meaning of their participation in a community-university partnership, and connect those definitions with their experiences is attained. Through the emergent themes in Chapter 5, this chapter builds upon those findings framed within the conceptual framework created for this study. Connecting the elements of the mutually beneficial, community-university partnership framework with the findings, this chapter enhances the information on community-university partnerships through the community partner's perspective. In addition, this chapter will present the study's limitations and implications for research and practice as well as future research.

Discussion of Findings

This section introduces the findings from the data within the context of the conceptual framework created for this study. The theories of boundary spanning, place building, knowledge theories, and organization theory's use of relationship all informed the methodology of the study. As a result, these findings complement the core essence and composite themes that were previously presented. This study also provides an opportunity to expand on a conceptual framework that may be helpful for others studying

community-university partnerships. By using established theories within the field of community engagement, this section builds upon the initial conceptual framework to create a more effective mechanism in order to understand mutually beneficial community-university partnerships. Since the ideas of mutual benefit and reciprocity originate from the university side, it was imperative that this study ascertains how the community side, represented by community agents, saw and experienced these elements, if at all. As a result, the following findings are framed within the elements and themes of the conceptual framework: boundary spanning, place building, relationships, knowledge, perspectives, and values. The findings also indicate that the conceptual framework should be expanded to include elements of connections, causes, and context.

Before recounting the key findings of the study, it is important to note that there was a prevalent underlying point throughout the data. Given that it affected the other key findings, it is imperative to situate it before the findings. While the community agents engaged in a community-university partnership with the university and the division, it was a means to an end. The overall purpose of community engagement is to further a cause or mission, and although the participants find worth and purpose in this particular community-university partnership, it is often not the only one they have on or off the UT Austin campus, nor is a university partnership the only way that the community agents participate in community engagement. Indeed, as higher education institutions themselves have different types of engagements–as evident in the diverse representation of participants in this study–community agents seek out various entities with whom to engage in order to advance their agendas.

KEY FINDING #1: CREATING A COMMUNITY IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Both boundary spanning and place building theories discuss the creation of a space between the community and the higher education institution. Creating bridges between academia and the community is the cornerstone of boundary spanning (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Place building adds to the idea of boundary spanning as it takes the entities who are boundary spanners and places them in a context in which events, programming, and initiatives complement the goals, values and missions of the boundary spanners (Thomas & Cross, 2007). Place building, as boundary spanning, needs not be about the creation of a physical space, though that is one element of community-university partnerships. This manifestation can be physical, as Beverly's experience as an incubator in the Community Engagement Center specified, or it can be making connections within both spheres. According to Hynie, MacNevin, Prescod, Rieder, and Schwartzentruber (2016):

> The genuine sharing of a physical space in the community by university and community can not only be an instantiation of boundary spanning, but a foundation on which to build other forms of boundary spanning activities, and so may contribute in important ways to the sustainability of the overall partnership. (p. 28)

The participants' experiences indicate their expectations of the community-university partnership in terms of creating a space for making connections inside and outside the university. The space and role that community agents and their university counterparts play can be in an actual space or not. As such, the lived experiences of the participants affirm the need for the elements of place building and boundary spanning within the conceptual framework on mutually beneficial, community-university partnerships.

Convening Inside and Outside the University

The participants looked to the community-university partnership as well as community engagement as a way to work with various groups towards a common cause (Adams, 2014). As a result, there were different ways in which they saw the work of boundary spanners and place builders in their efforts through community engagement. For some of the participants, like Thomas, Peter, Frank, Anne Hathaway, and Servant, they are boundary spanners in their own roles within their organizations. They work to convene different community entities together to deal with issues that relate to their organizational goals (McMillan, Goodman, & Schmid, 2016). Their partnership with the university and the division is one of those connections (Ferman & Hill, 2004). Other participants, including Katalina, Beverly, and Nathan, have created partnerships within the university with different entities including the DDCE. By doing so, they were able to build bridges between the dominant higher education entity in the city and their community organization. Another grouping of the participants, such as Frank, Lee, and Sara, look towards their partnership with the university and the division to create more connections for them within the community at large. Given the influence that the university has within the community and the city, the participants found a benefit of working with the university as a conduit through which to advance their community agendas (Dempsey, 2010). In addition, while this is one way in which to categorize the participants, they often fall into more than one grouping, depending on the needs of their organization. Regardless of what role the community agents saw themselves in, the idea

of convening and creating connections within the community and the university was an important way of enhancing their community engagement work.

DDCE

How the participants viewed the purpose of the division was very much framed within their perspectives and their needs as a community partner. The participants recognized that the creation and sustainability of the DDCE was the university's response to institutionalizing not only diversity on campus but community engagement off campus (Lall, 2010; Ross, 2002; Thompson, 2002). Through the division, the participants saw the changes that UT Austin was making to address past issues that arose from historic town-gown relations. Some of the participants indicated that they wanted the DDCE to serve as a boundary spanner within and outside the university. They felt this should be done by connecting the community partner with academic entities on campus that could provide research or student support, for instance, or with other community partners that would help further their cause. Weerts and Sandmann's (2008) research on institutionalizing community engagement indicates the usefulness of having a hub to connect entities across the campus. However, for the participants in this study, this sometimes caused frustration for the community agents because they did not see that come to fruition within their partnership.

The participants discussed how the DDCE itself was a place builder in the sense that it created community through its community-university partnerships, from the annual community leadership awards that are held in different areas in the city to its Community Engagement Center located in East Austin that serves as a community resource as well as

a prior home to incubator programs. As for those participants who had a closer relationship with the university or the division through the organizations that they represented, they further suggested that the division could expand its role as a place builder by sharing information about the activities within the campus that relate to the division and community engagement. The expectation of the university through the division being a convener is supported in prior studies (see, for example, Dempsey, 2010; Sandy & Holland, 2006). Furthermore, the participants indicated that the DDCE served as the visual representation of the community engagement arm of the university. Given the historical trends of the university within its surrounding communities, the participants found that the division and its leadership were creating changes that were positively affecting community perceptions about the university. Although no participant insinuated that the past has been forgotten, they found that the work of the DDCE was impactful, especially in changing the perception about the university's behavior in the community.

Community Partners as Boundary Spanners

Adams' (2014) research indicated that community partners could be boundary spanners within their community-university partnerships. The lived experiences of the participants in this research study supports this claim as the background of the participants in community engagement underscore their capabilities as boundary spanners. Their focus on communication, open-mindedness, and big-picture thinking also complement the elements of being a boundary spanner. McNall (2014) provides an expanded definition of boundary spanning as:

> The process of working across boundaries within and between universities and community-based agencies, organizations, and groups to garner support, resources, and information and to establish the relationships, infrastructure, and processes necessary to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals. (p. 148)

The community agents have entered into a community-university partnership voluntarily with the university and the division. As a result, their rationale for engaging with a higher education institution is for a greater cause, and by being a boundary spanner, they can move towards affecting change within their focus area. While the study focused on the community agents as potential boundary spanners, the community agents also described their contacts within the division, which also served as the boundary spanner from the university side. As Lee (2012) found, there are internal and external boundary spanners in community engagement, and although the emphasis of this study is on the external, the internal boundary spanners played a role in how the community agents experienced their involvement in their community-university partnership.

KEY FINDING #2: CONTEXT MATTERS

Theories within the conceptual framework may implicitly indicate context–especially boundary spanning and place building or through the perspectives and values of the community partners. Yet, the initial framework did not denote context specifically. Through the data analysis, the participants' discussions about their experiences in community-university partnerships revealed an important element: context matters. Given that the community in which the participants engaged with affected the participants' perceptions and purpose of community engagement, community–regardless of how the participants defined it personally–played a significant role in their rationale to

engage in partnerships. Indeed context, like the first key finding, was not necessarily the physical context that the community agents experienced; it also included the personal background of the community agents. Therefore, the second key finding about context encompassed a number of factors, including personal causes, connections to the university, and the history of Austin and UT Austin.

Personal and Organizational Causes

How and why the community agents began to work in their communities and continue to do so are because of the alignment between their personal and organizational missions and causes that are important to them. Oftentimes the personal and organizational aspects intersected since a number of participants indicated that working or creating the organization was done in order to advance a personal goal. While almost all of the participants have community engagement as part of their job description, not one of them indicated that they engage with the community and partner with the university because it was a part of their job. Rather, this engagement stemmed from their upbringing, their missions, organizational missions, or a deep rooted belief in working for the greater good. As Adams (2014) explains, community agents' "motivations ranged from personal motives to community-focused intentions" (p. 116). The findings from the data analysis in this study reflect Adams' study.

Every one of the community agents has participated in community engagement for at least a year and has represented a community-university partnership that has been sustained for more than two years. Even the partnership that ended had been maintained for over two years. As a result of their past experiences coupled with their personal

drives to participate in community engagement, there was a strong correlation in how the community agents viewed their work in community engagement in general and the purpose of their community-university partnership in particular. The participants who have had a long history of participating in their communities often had pragmatic approaches and rationales about how effective the partnership could be. Their experiences have shaped their expectations and realities of how a higher education institution could contribute to their personal or organizational cause. In addition, while few, some participants indicated frustration with their community-university partnership. As Sandy and Holland (2006) found, such partners adopted a "'transactional' approach;" whereas, "partners that seemed to experience fewer of these obstacles often spoke more about desire to further the common good" (p. 37).

Overall, in order to advance their personal causes, this community-university partnership was one of the ways to do so. Participants indicated satisfaction with their partnership when it aligned well and delivered results compatible to their personal or organizational missions. In a study on service learning, community partners, Rinaldo, Davis and Borunda (2015) found that community partners gain the most value when the partnership supported their organizational mission.

UT Austin Connections

A closer connection to the university or the division was related to the participants having more positive and realistic expectations about their partnerships. Specifically for participants who were undergraduate alumni of the university, their positive view of the university correlated to a positive view of the community engagement work that the

university and the DDCE are a part of as well as their own community-university partnership. Even those undergraduate alumni, who experienced hardships during their time there because of racial issues on campus, indicated a pride in seeing how the university is now approaching communities of color in the Austin area. In addition, being an alumnus was a motivating factor to starting a community-university partnership with the university as well as an influence in making sure the partnership stays sustainable.

Having insider knowledge about UT Austin and the DDCE also affected how the community agents saw the objectives of their partnership. The participants, whose organization had a symbiotic connection to the university or the division, described their experiences with the processes, bureaucracy, and even lack of transparency that are sometimes prevalent in a higher education institution. For the participants who had a more distant connection to the university, their experiences showed a lack of comprehension about the structure of a higher education institution or how a division like the DDCE worked within an institution like UT Austin. Buys and Burnsall (2007) relate a similar point in their research:

> University–community partnerships are influenced by the different contexts each party brings to the collaboration, such as institutional factors, resources and climate… Community partners sometimes lack understanding of the university environment. It is therefore important to describe and prepare community partners for the university system (e.g. the length of time to implement processes). It also suggests that the university system needs to foster community partnerships through more 'user-friendly' practices. (p. 81)

Austin and UT Austin History

All the participants chosen for the phenomenological portion of the study represented an organization based in Austin, Texas. This was done intentionally given the parallel history that the university and the city have together ("Austin," 2009) and to see how that history, if at all, affected the community engagement experiences of the participants. By chance, all of the participants have lived in Austin for many years with the average being closer to 20 years. This is because a number of them are native Austinites, or they came to Austin to attend the university and stayed after graduation to begin their careers. All the participants indicated that the history of the city and the university, especially concerning communities of colors, did not impact their organizations' stances on engaging with the university currently. Nonetheless, almost all of the participants acknowledged the past actions of the university and why the creation of the division has helped stem the negative behaviors that have affected East Austin. On a personal level, a few of the participants recounted that it was the university's past, both on and off campus, that spurred them into the work that they do. This history particularly affected the participants in making sure that students of similar backgrounds to them do not have negative experiences and that communities in East Austin are better protected against any encroachment by the university. Sabzalieva's (2016) research on history and engagement complements the findings about historical context: "the local element is important both because most universities' heritages are closely aligned with the communities around them" (pp. 13-14).

Overall, as much as Austin the city influenced the community agents, so too did UT Austin. The consensus was that the university was embedded within the community, and thus not only was it imperative to engage with the university, but such engagement could also address the issues that the community at large was facing in Austin. Most of the participants described the power and scope of the university at the local, regional, state, and even national levels; as a result, even though the actions of the university were not always as they are today, the community agents recognized the advantages of engaging with an institution like UT Austin to further a cause. For the participants, they recognize that UT is part of the community. Indeed, a number of organizations–including some within this study–have started out or are based from the university. This also leads to a blurring of the line between where the community and university begin. Thus, while some participants still feel that the university is too insular, there is agreement that there is a marked difference in how the university used to interact with its engagement in the community today.

KEY FINDING #3: THE NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE

While a recent study argued that community engagement needs to move beyond knowledge transfer or knowledge creation and towards knowledge co-creation (Cook & Nation, 2016), that was not reflected in the experiences of the participants in this study. They saw the role of knowledge as a way to connect with the university, provide opportunities for students, enhance their organization's efforts, and overall, help the communities they served. Although knowledge included different elements to the participants based on their organizational needs, the common theme about creation of

knowledge was that it helped imply whether a community-university partnership was successful or not per the participants' experiences.

Within the conceptual framework, knowledge is an identified element; however, through this study's findings, it is imperative that further explanation is included about what knowledge entails. This is primarily because the student element was not included within the framework though it was a commonly raised issue by the participants.

Need for Research

A common issue that the participants described was the need for more knowledge for their organization from the university and or DDCE. They wanted relevant research for their organizations as well as stronger connections to the colleges and schools in the university. The participants, hence, looked to the DDCE as a hub to create this knowledge or connections to academics across the campus, but some participants already had established partnerships on the UT Austin campus as well as with other local higher education institutions to work on knowledge creation. Some of the participants wanted to see that the knowledge created in the academy could be actualized through their organization's practice. As a result, the participants indicated elements of both knowledge flow and knowledge transfer as necessary in their community-university partnership, so that knowledge created on one side of the partnership could affect or influence the other side and vice versa (Weerts, 2005).

Moreover, as knowledge transfer theory suggests, some of the participants described that through collaborating and working on joint endeavors, one side could not create the research alone (Schuetze, 2010). While some participants indicated that they

felt the university appreciated their organization and expertise, others were not sure that occurred within their partnership. The concepts of knowledge transfer and flow depended on the perceived needs of the participants as well as the context of the community-university partnership. Since some of the partnerships included higher levels of interaction between the university and community, the community agents' needs there differed from those partnerships that the community agents saw more as sponsorships, where they expected monetary support from the DDCE and the university more so than relevant research and academic connections.

Student Learning

Although none of the community-university partnerships represented in this study included a service-learning component for UT Austin students, all of the participants discussed the importance of student involvement and achievement as part of community engagement and community-university partnerships. This was a slightly surprising finding, as nothing within the interview protocol directed a discussion about student involvement in the community; rather, the participants brought up the topic themselves. However, since most of the organizations represented directly or indirectly affected students on the UT Austin campus, it is understandable that student development is an important factor for the participants in this study. Sandy and Holland (2006) found a similar finding in their study:

> One of the most compelling findings of this study is the community partner's profound dedication to educating college students–even when this is not an expectation, part of their job description, or if the experience provides few or no short- and long-term benefits for their organization. (p. 34)

As a result, even though service learning was not a primary point within the community-university partnership, the community agents indicated ways that students could: earn course credits, gain experiences in the public sector, incorporate different points of view, and be introduced to graduate school experiences.

Some of the participants also discussed K-12 students in terms of how UT Austin and DDCE should increase its outreach to better serve this population of students. Within this thread of discussion, the participants saw how the university could increase its community engagement not necessarily through the specific community-university partnerships that the participants represented but rather through a larger scale approach to engagement that encompassed the entire state of Texas.

KEY FINDING #4: IT IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout the data analysis, what became most evident about community-university partnerships was their foundation of relationships. These relationships are based on time, effort, communication, trust, respect and compatibility, elements necessary for community engagement partnerships (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012; Williamson et al., 2016). Similarly, Cook's (2015) dissertation uses care theory as a framework to understanding community-university engagement; he recommends, "that the complexity of human relationships underpinning the work of engagement not be overlooked, underappreciated, or otherwise excluded from consideration" (p. 155). The relationships formed from a community-university partnership are about the human interactions that occur within and outside of the partnership. As with any relationship, issues of sustainability, compatibility, and commitment are found in community-university

partnerships. The community agents often discussed the people that make up the university side of the partnership, especially since it is with them that community partners build the partnership into a relationship. Some of the relationships predated the partnership and vice versa; this affected expectations to a degree but not the overall structure and purpose. As Clayton et al. (2010) point out, partnerships include such relationships that are "characterized by closeness, equity, and integrity" (p. 5).

Interpersonal Factors

For the participants in the study, the interpersonal factors within the partnership helped frame it as a relationship to them. These relationships within the partnership grew out of a number of factors including: loyalty to UT Austin as alumni, previous connections with DDCE through community events, and strong connections that resulted from the partnership. While only a few of the participants described power imbalances within the partnership as a whole, how they depicted the partnership came down to the relationship they saw forming with the people from the university and the division. As a result, interpersonal factors such as trust, communication, and respect were highlighted by the participants as necessary elements for them to continue engaging with a higher education institution. This was especially significant because the participants acknowledged that given the size and scope of UT Austin, they needed a department to serve as a hub – DDCE – as well as a contact person(s) that could help foster their partnership to actualize results. Even being able to interact with the university side at a social level helped make community-university partnerships more appealing to the community side. The participants described that working with the DDCE staff on an

individual level solidified the feeling that it was a mutual relationship rather than just a partnership to achieve a set goal or create an initiative.

This finding resonates with the literature on community-university partnerships, particularly that written with the community perspective in mind (Baum, 2000; Dempsey, 2010; Jacob et al., 2015; Leiderman et al., 2002; Price et al., 2012; Sadeler et al., 2012). As Buys and Burnsall (2007) indicate, interpersonal relationships play a significant role in cultivating community-university partnerships:

> The most influential and important ingredient for managing the challenges of a community partnership is interpersonal factors. Open communication helps clarify the direction of the partnership and resolve issues. Trust is nurtured through regular contact between members, transparency of views, respect for role boundaries and the delivery of high-quality outcomes. Good [humor], tolerance and respect for one another's cultural/ institutional differences, and sensitivity to one another's needs also promotes a sense of trust. (pp. 83-84)

Based on the study's findings, a correlation existed with the participants who described their partnerships as relationships and finding more agreement in the partnership.

University Contacts

Given that relationships as a whole were an important indicator for the community agents in understanding and describing their experiences in their community-university partnerships, it was unsurprising that the study's participants discussed individuals who helped shape their perspectives. For instance, all but one of the participants directly discussed Dr. Vincent's role in enhancing the community engagement side of the university. Even for those participants who did not directly engage with him within their community-university partnership, they reflected that his presence and purpose have affected how the community sees the engagement efforts of

the university. Cooper and Orrell (2016) detail that "leadership at the senior level of the university is needed to endorse, encourage and assure the development of aligned and committed partnerships that begin with the needs, as they are experienced by the community" (p. 121).

What was interesting to see in the data was that participants scaled their partnerships down to the people they engaged with in the partnership. This indicates that though the community-university partnership was housed in the DDCE, the participants framed the partnerships based on the people in DDCE from Dr. Vincent, to individual staff members, or to the DDCE team in general. This human approach affirms that the community agents saw their partnerships as more of relationships. It also helped the community agents find someone they could create a rapport and communicate with when issues arose. In addition, some of the participants also discussed how the community-university partnership also included a DDCE or UT Austin administrator serving on the board of the organization. Having the university side serve at the board or committee level led to further engagement with other entities on and off campus for the community agents. This added another dimension to the partnership that allowed the community agents to make other connections and see the partnership as multi-faceted.

Sustainability of Relationship

As Bringle and Hatcher (2002) revealed "not only is a relationship evaluated from one's own perspective, but parties also examine what is invested and obtained from the relationship relative to the partner" (p. 509). This was quite evident throughout the study's findings since the partners not only described the relationship from their own

lived experiences but also what they saw the university and the division doing that could be enhanced or changed. While the participants saw their partnerships as relationships, for them, it was a sustainable relationship with a commitment from both sides.

Sustainability was important because it justified to the community agents the benefits and costs of entering into a community-university partnership (Leiderman et al., 2002). Some of the partnerships developed organically whereas others were more purposeful. However, that did not detract from the overall purpose that the community agents wanted to accomplish. Successful partnerships included accomplished goals, constant communication, and value from both sides (Worrall, 2007). Feeling valued and appreciated were important to the community agents because they did not enter into these community-university partnerships lightly, and they saw the overall worth of such engagement. They wanted that to also be reflected by the university side's appreciation of their community organization and the community's perspective (Sandy & Holland, 2006). The idea of sustainability within a relationship supports Gelmon et al.'s (1998) claim that community partners felt their partnership was effective when it was sustainable and included active participation and consistent communication, and they were treated as assets within the community-university partnership.

To ensure the sustainability of the partnership, community agents pointed to the importance of a feedback mechanism to assure that both sides understand how the other is doing. Some of the participants indicated that this research study, through the questionnaire and interviews, was appreciated because of the opportunity to share their experiences and what they wanted to see going forward in their partnership. While most

assessment of community-university partnerships is done for the higher education side (Hart & Northmore, 2011; Holland 2009), the participants in this study indicated that they wanted to be a part of that assessment, for it could be mutually beneficial for both sides of the partnership to understand the strengths as well as areas of improvements.

KEY FINDING #5: CONTEXTUALIZATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Since the overall inducement of this study was to display community voice in community-university partnerships, the definitions of key terms were not provided to the participants. Only the Carnegie Foundation's definition of community engagement, which includes elements of mutual benefit and reciprocity, was introduced to the participants. By doing so, the community agents' voice, descriptions, and definitions would supersede anything the research had presented. Higher education research consistently uses the terminology of mutual benefit and reciprocity to describe community-university partnerships (Janke, 2013); therefore, an assumption of this study was that the community agents would also frame their experiences within the same language. While they do so–and research question one attests to the various definitions that the community agents utilize–there is a difference in how community agents see mutual benefit, reciprocity, and even community engagement than how higher education institutions do. This is not only a community side issue. As Hammersley (2017) indicates, "the agenda and goals of community engagement in higher education remain somewhat ambiguous, as these guiding concepts are understood and interpreted in diverse and problematic ways by different actors and institutions" (p. 115). Although there are common elements within the university and community definitions, the terminology used

in community engagement, from community to partnership to reciprocity, lacks consistency within both the higher education and community side of community engagement.

Moreover, although the participants recognized a difference between mutual benefit and reciprocity, the terms were often used in conjunction with one another. This was true in this research study as well as in higher education literature (Dostillio et al., 2012). Most of the participants had a readily formed definition of mutual benefit; they were less sure of what reciprocity was in connection with community engagement in general and community-university partnerships in particular. Through their definitions and examples, the participants identified elements that need to be included for a partnership to be mutually beneficial and or reciprocal. They happened to use other terminology that complemented the higher education approach to those two terms including: collective impact, intentionality, mutual respect, equitable exchange, and purposeful engagement. Thus, how they came about their definitions was framed within their own experiences in community engagement. Lloyed et al.'s (2017) comment reflects this finding: "these observations are indicative of the complexity of how reciprocity unfolds in community-university engagements. They point to the importance of taking into account the context, timeframe, scale, and interpretive lens of the "viewer" when seeking to analyze empirical data" (p. 260).

Enhancing the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework created for this study was based on theories used to understand community-university partnerships. While the theories stem from the higher education side, an attempt was made to include those that were found to be equally relevant to the community side. Grounded in the literature reviewed before the study itself, the elements found in the complementing theories created a foundation for understanding the lived experiences of community agents. Given the findings from the study's data, a few more elements need to be included such as context, connections, and causes. While they still relate to the already established theories, they add another dimension to understanding the complex and unique relationships within community-university partnerships. Although this framework is relevant to this study, more research needs to be done to create further interpretations so that it can become a generalizable model relevant to community engagement research.

Before the data findings, the conceptual model focused on boundary spanning, place building, knowledge theories, and organizational theory's use of relationships. The elements included were: knowledge, values, perspectives, and relationships. Based on the literature, these elements and theories helped to explain the structure of mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships. Figure 6.1 shows the initial conceptual framework visualization.

After the study's findings, it is important to revisit the conceptual framework to see if it continues to align well with the data. Since the four theories were affirmed within the findings, no changes are made to their inclusion, though how they are visually

structured should be altered. It was evident from the findings that the theories build on one another in a complementary way. Thus, a concentric circle approach is how I am formatting the second iteration of my conceptual framework.

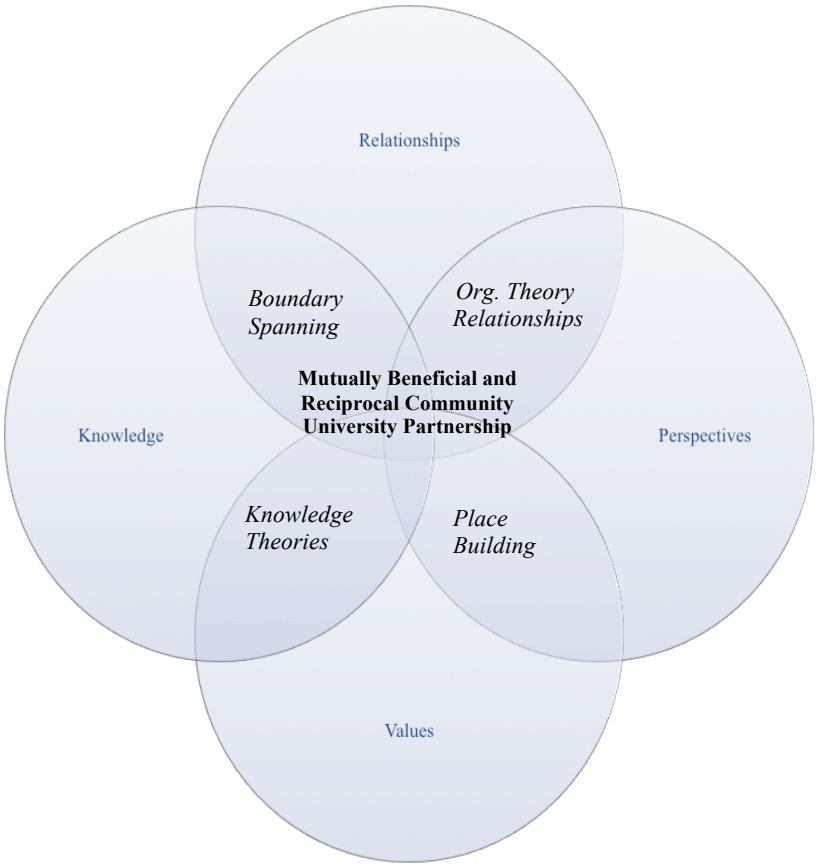

Figure 6.1: Initial Framework on Mutually Beneficial and Reciprocal Community University Partnership with Elements and Related Theories

The concentric circle format includes the important findings from the study as well as an adjustment to how some of the initial elements are re-structured in the new model. Figure 6.2 depicts the new visualization. The purpose of this model is its applicability to both the higher education and community side of community-university

partnerships. Starting from the largest circle to the smallest, the first circle is context. While not initially included within the first conceptual framework as an element, it was an underlying point within how community-university partnerships develop. Since context affects all the elements, as the largest circle, it encompasses the partnership. As McMillan, Goodman, and Schmid (2016) explain, "community engagement takes place at the nexus of two interacting communities—the university and the communities that partner with the university" (pp. 8-9).

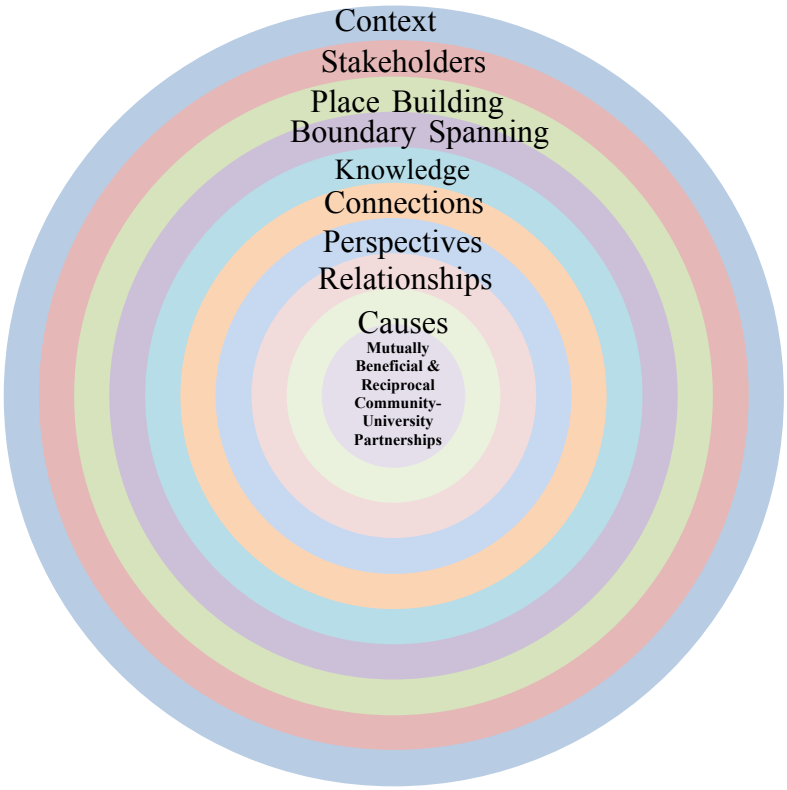

Figure 6.2: New Framework On Mutually Beneficial And Reciprocal Community-University Partnerships

The second circle is stakeholders both from the community and higher education side. From the data, while the participants were described as community agents, they each represented a different position professionally and personally in the context of their community engagement work. In addition, the participants discussed the role of administrators in DDCE as well as faculty members, students, and different entities on the campus that were influential within their partnership. For this version of the model, stakeholders will encompass all people and entities engaged in the community-university partnership. Just as Lasker and Weiss (2003) describe about community stakeholders:

> The people and organizations involved are the building blocks of synergy. The bring different kinds of knowledge, skills, and resources to a partnership and it is by combining these resources in various ways that the participants, as a group, are able to accomplish more than any of them can on their own. (p. 124)

Since identifying who falls within the classification of stakeholder is far from simple (Jongbloed et al. 2008; Khanyile & Green, 2016), for the purpose of this current conceptualization, the stakeholders circle will be broad.

The third, fourth, and fifth circles represent three of the four initial theories that framed the study. Place building was found to be relevant by the participants in the study both within the community-university partnership and through the DDCE serving as an institutionalized approach to community engagement in the university. Within the place building aspect of the partnership are boundary spanners; thus, the fourth circle. Knowledge creation was underscored in the data findings. Because there was not a significant distinction between knowledge transfer and knowledge flow within the data,

for the time being, knowledge will serve as a general descriptor of knowledge creation both on and off campus for the mutual benefit of the partners.

The sixth circle is a new element that was made evident through the data. The community agents found connections to be an important feature and expectation of their community-university partnership (Ferman & Hill, 2004). They wanted greater connections on campus, within the community, and through DDCE. A number of the participants also indicated a personal connection that resulted or was enhanced by being in the community-university partnership. As a result, this circle represents the connections: past, present, and future.

Perspectives represent the seventh circle. Perspectives were included as an initial element in the model as were values. Since there were similarities in how the participants framed their values and perspectives from the study, this model incorporates values under the header of perspectives. In addition, after the findings, it is important to distinguish that perspectives include not only each side's viewpoint on the partnership but also their assessment of each other (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). This feeds into the research around the next circle: relationships. At least from this research study, relationships played an integral role in how the community agents viewed their community-university partnership. Consequently, aside from causes–the 9th circle–the community agents' descriptions of relationships justify placing it next to the overall mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnership circle. The participants in this study found their relationships to not only affect how they saw their partnership, but it also shaped how other elements played out within that engagement.

The second to last circle is causes. The personal and organizational missions as well as the causes that the community agents felt were imperative to address were often the motivation for the community agents to engage in the work they do. Entering into a community-university partnership was often predicated on whether the cause that the community agent wanted to address aligned with the goals and mission of the university and the division. Similar to relationships, causes affected how the other elements played out in the partnership.

Thus, the innermost circle is mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships. Just as in the first iteration, these community-university partners influence and are influenced by the other circles in this model. Various elements contribute to a community-university partnership, and as this study shows, no two partnerships are exactly alike. From the purpose and goals to the people involved, community-university partnerships are unique and complex. This conceptual model attempts to address the various factors that affect community-university partnerships while also being broad enough to encompass the many dimensions that form such partnerships. Mutual benefit and reciprocity, while detailed in this last circle, should be evident in each enveloping circle and from both the higher education and community side of the partnership.

Limitations

As with any qualitative study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations that resulted from the structure and framework of this particular study. First, the findings of a

qualitative study are not generalizable. Although the questionnaire portion of the study provides a quantitative approach, it is not extensive enough to inform the overall study. Rather, this study provides a phenomenological exploration of the lived experiences of 15 individuals who are community agents in a specific division at a specific higher education institution. Nonetheless, the findings might be informative to people working in community engagement inside and outside academia.

Even though the potential community agents' contact information was provided from within the division, those who completed both the questionnaire and the interview portion of the study self-selected to participate in the study. As was evident from their responses, the community agents who were interviewed discussed a high level of participation in community engagement. To an extent, it is unsurprising that such individuals would be willing to participate in a study related to an area of interest for them. However, the perspectives of those with average to low engagement were not present within the study. Moreover, while I, as the researcher, attempted to distance my connection as an employee of the division from the study, that may have impacted the response rate for the questionnaire.

In addition, since the primary focus of the study continued to be the community partners' voice, I did not interview their university counterparts to better understand the community-university partnership. I also did not interview community members or students who may have been impacted or participated in programming or initiatives related to the partnership. This potential triangulation of data can be done through future research.

Diversity was present within the sample group in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, and even focus areas. The participants also represented different years of experience in community engagement, though most were skewed towards five plus years of engagement. This could be a potential limitation as the voices of those community agents who have only recently begun to participate in community-university partnerships are not well represented in the study. Only two participants indicated their experience in community engagement as ranging between 1-2 years, although during the interviews, their descriptions of community engagement negated this short time span and, instead, showed longer engagement. While the participants represented community-university partnerships that ranged in their time spans, only one participant discussed a no longer active partnership. Interviewing participants who no longer engage with a university partner could provide a different perspective than that which was presented in this study. In addition, the site selection for this study was based on one institution that had a department dedicated to community engagement. Since other higher education institutions might have different structures in place, the experiences of community agents who participate in community-university partnerships may be different than those reflected in this study.

Finally, the conceptual framework itself is a limitation to this study. As there is no established framework in which to study community-university partnerships, let alone mutually beneficial ones, it was necessary for the study that such a mechanism was created. However, using theories that have been previously used to study community-

university partnerships was important, other theories and perspectives were left out of the framework, which could have skewed the findings of the study.

Significance

The findings of this study and the study itself impart potential areas of significance by presenting the community perspective in community-university partnerships for research, practice, and policy implications. As one of the few empirical studies on community partners' lived experiences in community-university partnerships, this study contributes to the research on community engagement. Most of the extant literature has focused on the higher education side (Adams, 2014; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, 2010) or on a rhetorical approach (Watson, 2007). Conceptually, this study also introduces a potential framework to understand the elements that community partners find relevant to a community-university partnership. The framework, grounded in theories that arose from the higher education perspective, thus incorporates both sides so that a fuller picture of community-university partnerships can be understood. While boundary spanning, place building, knowledge theories, and organizational theory's use of relationships as a metaphor are all relevant to recognizing community-university partnerships, they do not present entirely such engagement. This study adds to the elements in those theories by including: context, connections, and causes.

Moreover, while best practices and delineating elements for successful community-university partnerships are relevant, this study has further implications for

practice for both higher education institutions interested in community engagement and for community organizations wanting to engage with colleges and universities in their communities. Additionally, as the public perception of higher education continues to tilt towards it being a private good, it is imperative that higher education institutions continue to feature work that is meant for the public good. Community engagement through community-university partnerships is one such mechanism that colleges and universities can employ. At the same time, given the current political climate, community organizations, especially non-profit entities, need to make sure that they are collaborating with different groups to ensure that their organizational goals and mission are met.

Implications for Research

This research study adds to the literature on community engagement by examining the perspectives and experiences of community partners in community-university partnerships. As higher education institutions continue to increase and institutionalize community engagement, having a conceptual framework to understand community-university partnerships from both the higher education and university side is imperative. While the conceptual framework in this study is nascent, the findings from this study can lead to a more established approach to understanding community-university partnerships within the concepts of mutual benefit and reciprocity.

Specifically, this study provides a better understanding of how community agents in community-university partnerships with a research one institution that has an established division for community engagement define mutual benefit and reciprocity as

well as make meaning of their experiences in such partnerships. This study also seeks to understand how the community agents' definitions influence their experiences as community partners. Most of the research so far has not taken a phenomenological approach to ascertaining the lived experiences of community partners in community engagement and community-university partnerships. While there is a larger focus on service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Gelmon et al., 1998) looking at partnerships in general will showcase in the research the complexity and unique partnerships that higher education institutions can engage through to create effective change within their surrounding communities.

Through the conceptual framework, this study looks at the similarities in relevant theories that help situate community engagement practices of community-university partnerships. By utilizing complimentary elements within the four common theories of place building, boundary spanning, knowledge theories, and organization theory's metaphor of relationships, it builds upon the complex and unique nature of individual community-university partnerships. Moreover, by focusing on theories that incorporate the perspectives and experiences of the community partners, a fuller scope of the elements within community-university partnerships can be described. Numerous scholars have mentioned the need for understanding community-university partnerships from the community perspective (Barrera, 2015; Bortolin, 2011; Fullbright-Anderson et al., 2001; Omerikwa, 2012; Sandmann, 2008; Sandy & Holland, 2006;); as a result, this study is an addition to the empirical research on the community focus in community engagement.

Moreover, the questionnaire instrument used in this study could have greater applicability to a quantitative approach to understanding the experiences of community partners. For instance, the Carnegie Foundation's (2015) elective community engagement classification indicates the need to quantify community perspective in the academy. A quantitative approach to community perspectives in community engagement could add to the overall research in this field; therefore, this questionnaire could provide the foundations for collecting quantitative data for research on community engagement in higher education. Thus, the questionnaire could be a useful tool for other higher education institutions wanting to survey their community partners to better understand their perspectives and experiences as they relate to the institutionalized practices within their colleges or universities.

Implications for Practice

Community-university partnerships are a growing trend in higher education, and one that community organizations are also seeking out for their own benefits (Benneworth, 2013; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Ferman & Hill, 2004; Gelmon, Jordan, & Seifer, 2013). Most literature written about community engagement in higher education is more rhetorical (Watson, 2007), which does provide guidelines for either higher education institutions seeking to establish community engagement endeavors or community organizations wanting to engage with a college or university. Through a more empirical approach, a systemic understanding of community engagement through community-university partnerships could be established. Although the focus of this study

is on the community side of community engagement, its applicability encompasses both academia and community. Indeed, the study's findings indicate how community-university partnerships advance the needs of the community while enhancing the perception of the university, how community agents connect their definitions of mutual benefit with their past experience and future endeavors in community engagement, and how a relationship-based approach allows community agents to find the value in engaging with a higher education institution.

The overall purpose of the study is to add to the empirical research on community engagement. Yet, by presenting the community voice through experiences and perspectives of the community agents, this study provides a practical understanding that can be beneficial to community organizations and community partners looking to higher education institutions as possible partners on relevant causes for both of them.

While the study in no way attempted to assess the DDCE, the experiences of the community agents in this study, both from the questionnaire and the phenomenological study, present some relevant insights to enhancing community engagement efforts. Since its inception, the DDCE has amassed over 400 community partners that range from the local to the national community. This study looked at the local community side of the division's community engagement work. While the community agents, for the most part, indicated that their needs were met through their partnership, the data shows a few elements that would enhance the partnership through the community perspective. First, most of the community agents explained that their partnership had no formalized planning; looking back, they suggested that having had a more structured approach would

have helped in reaching goals and making sure that the partnership reached a level of being mutually beneficial and reciprocal. Similarly, the community agents discussed the importance of having an organized plan going into the partnership, be it formalized or not, for the benefit of the community organization.

Second, the community agents stressed the importance of relationships, communications, and transparency in their work with a higher education institution. Relationships played a significant role in how the community agents perceived their partnerships. Those that had better connections with at least one person in the division found that they had better communication and someone they could easily connect with on issues relating to the partnership. However, because of the size of UT Austin, there is a degree of intimidation for community organizations in knowing where and who to reach out to within the institution. This leads to the issue of visibility within the community. While the UT Austin brand is well known, that is not the same for the community engagement arm of the university. Some of the community agents provided some recommendations in terms of connecting community engagement with athletics, of making the DDCE logo more visible in the community, and of increasing advertising of relevant programs and events relating to the community.

Finally, the community agents emphasized the role of compatibility in terms of mission alignment, fit, and overall goals of the community needs and the university's capabilities. When this fit occurred, the community agents found that their partnerships could be sustainable and could affect change in their communities. No matter how small or great the fit was, it was the community agent's perspective that indicated whether the

partnership was compatible to the overall goals of their organization. Most of the participants acknowledged the rigidity of a higher education institution; thus, it was imperative for them to find that alignment either in the DDCE or through other entities on campus.

Given the scope of an institution like UT Austin, it is important that the community finds points of entry into the higher education setting. Research has shown that an institutionalized approach to community engagement with a strong leadership figure positively influences community perceptions (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Lall, 2010; Ross, 2002; Thompson, 2002; Welch, 2016). The University of Texas at Austin through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement has achieved this; however, based on the findings of this study, there are more elements that can be incorporated into the community engagement branch of the university. The DDCE was established in 2007 and since that time, the community perception has changed towards the university. This is in no small part from the actions of the president of the university and the vice president for diversity and community engagement making community engagement one of the university's strategic priorities. In the past ten years, there has been a marked shift in how the community sees the university, especially given the historical issues in the surrounding communities.

University administrators, especially those in DDCE should consider incorporating the following elements to enhance their already established community engagement work. While these activities already occur, from the findings of this study, even the participants, who described their engagement with the university and DDCE as

falling within the higher spectrum, wanted to see more of these elements available to them and to the community in general. First, while the community agents were cognizant of where DDCE was relevant to their work, for many of them, they did not know the entire scope of the division and what connections the division had throughout the university. The community agents wanted the division to serve as a hub not only for community engagement in general but also as a convener that could provide connections with different schools, colleges, and units on campus. Thus, DDCE administrators should work on improving how the division is described and promoted to community organizations looking to engage as well as current partnerships wanting to expand.

In addition, as was evident in this study, the terminology used by the higher education side does not always translate to the experiences of the community side. Indeed, how higher education institutions define a community-university partnership may be seen by the community organizations in a different light. Therefore, the university and the division should consider co-creating common terminology with their community partners–including the terms: mutual benefit, reciprocity, community-university partnerships, community engagement–that can be disseminated as a way to create alignment and as a tool for potential community partners to see if their organization fits with the university.

This research study also has strong implications for community organizations looking to partner with a higher education institution in their community. The community agents provided a common set of recommendations that community organizations should take into consideration as they embark on community-university

partnerships. Before seeking out a partnership with a higher education institution, a community organization must have a plan and be organized in its approach. Even if the partnership does not take a formalized approach, by having a plan in place, the community organization can make sure that its goals are presented earlier rather than later in the relationship. Having a plan also allows the community organizations to see if their needs fit with the higher education institution they are seeking to partner with. A number of participants underscored the relevancy of fit and alignment before the partnership begins so that issues can be addressed. This includes researching the university, searching its relevant community engagement division or unit, and understanding the mission and vision of both. When the missions of the university side are compatible with the community organization's, then there is more likely to be mutual benefit within the partnership.

Another point is that community organizations should understand their worth and what they can bring to a community-university partnership. This all comes back to reciprocity and acknowledging the resources and abilities of both sides. While community organizations might have expectations of what a partnership with a higher education institution may entail, they also need to know what strengths and benefits they also bring to the partnership. Being in the community and representing a community can lead to more practical applications of research based practices that develop within the academy.

Finally, it is important for the community organizations to have a realistic understanding of how higher education institutions work and to find the right person to

interact with in the institution's community engagement branch. By having a realistic expectation of how a college or university functions, the challenges of working with a large bureaucratic system can be stymied to a degree. Moreover, knowing whom to talk with to create the partnership is important. A number of participants cautioned that this may take time, so community organizations need to be patient as well as communicative in making sure that their needs are addressed going into the partnership. Overall, the findings in this study indicate that creating and sustaining a community-university partnership is not an easy task. Nevertheless, ensuring that the needs of the community organization are met can lead to a mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnership that furthers the missions of the university and community side.

Implications for Policy

The debate surrounding higher education continues to fall on the issue of whether it is a public good or a private good. While the sentiments toward the purpose of higher education continue to fall within the private good sector, it is important that the community engagement aspect of higher education continues to focus on enhancing the common good (Brewster, Pisani, Ramseyer, & Wise, 2016). Through community engagement, higher education institutions and community organizations can address social issues. In the community engagement model that they developed, Brewster et al. (2016) explain the relevance of community-university partnerships: "the first and most important assumption of the model is that the social problem to be addressed is located neither within the community nor within the researcher but in the hypothetical middle, as

an issue to be shared" (p. 46). Community engagement can also affect the economic and social expectations of colleges and universities to shape needed change within relevant research, social mobility, as well as access and equity (Jongbloed et al., 2008; Scull & Cuthill, 2010). This is in addition to higher education institutions that stay mission driven (Jongbloed et al., 2008).

As a public research institution, The University of Texas at Austin depends on state funding as well as state support to ensure that it is staying true to its core purpose: "to transform lives for the benefit of society" (The University of Texas at Austin, 2017, "core purpose"). Even with budget constraints and legislative oversight, UT Austin needs to ensure that community engagement continues to be part of its internal policies as well as state policies related to engagement (Weerts, 2015). The mission of the university reaffirms the importance of community engagement:

> The mission of The University of Texas at Austin is to achieve excellence in the interrelated areas of undergraduate education, graduate education, research and public service….The university contributes to the advancement of society through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry and the development of new knowledge. The university preserves and promotes the arts, benefits the state's economy, serves the citizens through public programs and provides other public service. (The University of Texas at Austin, 2017, "mission")

As a result, the university, through its Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, needs to ensure that the alignment between mission and policy continues to advance the edicts of community engagement. The benefits that can be gained through community engagement will help the communities served as well as align to the mission of the university (Fitzgerald et al., 2012.

Moreover, how community engagement is conducted on college campuses needs to be better addressed by greater inclusion of the community voice. Social issues are often studied in the academy, yet the firsthand experiences that community organizations and partners can bring are necessary to fully grasp the implications of issues that affect the public good (Smerek, Pasque, Mallory, & Holland, 2005). As the findings in this study suggest, community partners want to have greater interaction and collaboration across the campus; thus, community engagement is a viable way for higher education institutions and their surrounding communities to come together and address issues that affect society through a research and practical-based approach.

Future Research

This research study provided a phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experiences of community partners in community-university partnerships. Using The University of Texas at Austin through its Division of Diversity and Community Engagement as the research site, the study underscored how community agents came to define mutual benefit, reciprocity, and community engagement and how their past and current experiences in community engagement connected to those definitions. While this study begins to add to the needed research about the community perspective in community engagement literature, there are a number of avenues to explore based on the findings of the study, the conceptual framework used, and an expansion of the scope of the sample. Consequently, this section will present recommendations for future research that advance this study and its focus.

The first recommendation is to continue bringing the community voice into academic research on community engagement. In order for community engagement to truly be reciprocal, acknowledging and appreciating the community side should be imperative. As Hammersley (2017) pronounces, "to more deeply understand the diverse understandings encapsulated by the term reciprocity, the historically unheard voices of community partners need to be engaged with. If that does not occur, our understandings of reciprocity remain unbalanced" (p. 128). While this study takes a phenomenological approach to highlighting community voice, it would be very useful for similar studies to use other methodologies, including participatory action research so that community partners can co-create the research study and have their voice heard throughout the entire process. This study's findings have shown that how the community side views community engagement has different facets than what the higher education side purports. Consequently, it is necessary that more research catalogues the experiences and perspectives of community partners in various types of community engagement roles. In addition, while this research should include an academic focus given the dearth of empirical data in this subject area, there needs to be practically written items, preferably co-authored with community partners, that can be insightful for community organizations engaged or looking to engage in community-university partnerships.

Secondly, while the conceptual framework used in this study has its basis in the community engagement literature, more studies need to examine if the framework and conceptual model are useful and relevant. Based on this study's findings, the framework was improved to include other pertinent elements; other studies should do the same in

assessing and building upon this framework for their research needs. While future research might find some usefulness from this proposed framework and model, it is essential that a conceptual framework is established that looks beyond the higher education focus to incorporate the community focus. As the interest in community engagement in higher education continues to increase, additional empirical studies need to be produced that move beyond the rhetorical stance currently found in the writings about it.

In addition to a qualitative approach, this subject area is suitable for a quantitative or a mixed methods approach. Ideally, this research study could have expanded on the questionnaire portion to create more of a mixed methods approach. Regardless of the limitations in this study, canvasing the community side of community-university partnerships through a survey can produce greater knowledge and understanding of the experiences, needs, and expectations of the community side. It can also allow for a longitudinal approach to the data so that higher education institutions and community partners can see the progressions that have occurred. Not only will this be useful for higher education institutions as they assess their institutionalized community engagement approaches, but it could possibly be useful in applying for recognition as a community engagement institution like the Carnegie Foundation's elective Community Engagement Classification. For the community side, quantitative data can provide guidelines and generalizability in what other community organizations are experiencing and gaining from such partnerships with higher education institutions. By adding the qualitative side

to the research as well, through a mixed methods approach, a fuller description of community engagement efforts can be considered.

While this study only looked at the community side of community-university partnerships, expanding that focus to other players in the community, from collaborating organizations to community members who benefit directly from the partnership, can further enhance the understanding about community-university partnerships. In addition, having a triangulation of data by focusing on specific community-university partnerships and studying all the various stakeholders involved from the community and university side could be another realm for future research. Generally, more research needs to be done in this field, and by having different voices present in the research, it can provide a more expansive view and understanding of the function of community-university partnerships beyond the need for higher education institutions to engage superficially within their communities.

What became apparent from this study is that the terminology used in the higher education literature and by higher education institutions did not transfer fully into the community side. Although the elements were similar, the approach and even the expectations were different. Therefore, future research should include an examination of how language and terminology play a role in community engagement. The ambiguity within the higher education side about what the various terms mean can further lead to vagueness in the community side about the expectations of such terms. Addressing the vocabulary uncertainty from the higher education side by creating a more common terminology can help both sides of the partnership. As the Carnegie Foundation's

definitions are often cited, if the Foundation provides more explanatory descriptions regarding community engagement, community-university partnerships, mutual benefit, and reciprocity, then it could be a start towards creating a common vocabulary used by all stakeholders involved in community-university partnerships.

More research needs to be done to ascertain the different types of community partners and partnerships present in community engagement in higher education. Even in this study of 15 participants, the type and scope of the partnerships differed in how the community agents saw their partnerships with the university and in how the DDCE categorized the partnerships. Future research can look at how partners and partnerships are categorized from both the community and university side to see the breadth and scope of engagement that occurs.

Finally, higher education institutions are using community engagement as a tool to collaborate with their communities at various levels. It is important that all colleges and universities, including UT Austin, who espouse the importance of such engagement to use resources and support to ensure the success of community engagement efforts. As society continues to change, higher education institutions need not forget the important resources, viewpoints, and experiences that the community, from community members to organizations, can add to research and practice. For engagement to be mutually beneficial and reciprocal, it is important that higher education institutions continue to move beyond a one-way approach to engagement and authentically bring the community into the academy in thoughtful and appropriate ways. Both sides can learn much from

one another, and community engagement through a community-university partnership provides a useful conduit to do so.

Conclusion

My journey to highlight community voice in community engagement began more than three years ago as my colleagues and I worked on the Carnegie Foundation's elective Community Engagement Classification for UT Austin. The university received the classification in 2015 (UT News, 2015) and continues to receive accolades in community engagement endeavors from the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll (Corporation for National & Community Service, n.d.) to Insight into Diversity's 2016 Diversity Champion designation (Insight into Diversity, 2017). Throughout the Carnegie application process and others, I realized that for higher education institutions, it is imperative that the experiences and voices of the community are central to the work of community engagement. Indeed, without the community presence, community engagement would not exist.

I hope that this research study contributes to this needed focus on community voice in higher education literature on community engagement. As I continue as a scholar-practitioner in this field, this work and others to follow will continue to emphasize the complexity and uniqueness of community-university partnerships and the power they have to create needed change. Overall, the experiences of the 15 participants in this study reaffirm the need to better understand how community engagement through

community-university partnerships work and how it can be enhanced so that both sides of the partnerships come to a mutually beneficial and reciprocal experience.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Email for Questionnaire Dissemination

Dear DDCE Community Partner:

My name is Jessica Khalaf, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration. I also work at The University of Texas at Austin in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE). My work and research focuses on community engagement, specifically community-university partnerships. Community engagement is not a one-way street, and as a community partner, it is imperative that your voice is heard and that you are a co-creator in community engagement initiatives. This questionnaire is just one step in this important process of making community engagement mutually beneficial and reciprocal.

I am conducting a dissertation study on community partners' experiences in community engagement. This questionnaire will provide a canvas of DDCE community partners. In addition, the questionnaire will ask for your potential interest in being in the second part of the dissertation study, which will consist of two rounds of interviews, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. As a community partner, your input and perspective is important for understanding how higher education institutions can continue to serve their communities with the upmost importance and respect.

During this twenty (20) minute questionnaire, you will provide your perspectives, insight, and experiences with community engagement through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and through the University of Texas at Austin. It is important that you respond honestly and, as such, we want to reassure you that all your responses will be kept confidential and that anonymity is provided. However, if you are interested in participating in the interviews, you will be asked to complete the contact information section of the questionnaire.

Thank you again for being part of this questionnaire. Your feedback will help the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and your fellow community partners to create more sustainable and impactful community initiatives going forward.

If you have questions or concern, please feel free to contact me at jessicakhalaf@austin.utexas.edu or call 512-232-7712

[clicking on the link will signal your acceptance and begin the questionnaire]

Sincerely,
Jessica Khalaf

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire Instrument

This questionnaire is part of a dissertation study on the experiences of community partners in community-university partnerships at The University of Texas at Austin through its Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. Your responses will be kept confidential. Following completion of the questionnaire, you will be asked if you have any interest in participating in two interviews, each lasting approximately 60-90, to further delve into the experiences of community partners. You participation in both the questionnaire and the subsequent interviews are completely voluntary.

1.	**What type of organization is it?**
	Non-profit organization
	School or education entity
	Business or for-profit organization
	Health or medical organization
	Governmental entity
	Social service agency
	Other: (please specify)_____

2.	**What is the focus of your organization?**
	Education
	Community issues
	Policies
	Young children or adults
	Underserved communities
	Other: (please specify)_____

3.	**What is your role at the organization?**
	CEO or President
	Vice President
	Community Liaison or Organizer
	Manager

	Other: (please specify)_____

4.	**Are you based in Austin, Texas?**
	Yes
	No

5.	**Is the Organization you are affiliated with based in Austin, Texas?**
	Yes
	No

6.	**How long have you, as an individual, been participating in community engagement?**
	0-1 years
	1-2 years
	2-3 years
	3-4 years
	4-5 years
	5+ years

7.	**How long have you, as an individual, been in a partnership and/or engaged with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, currently or in the past?**
	0-1 years
	1-2 years
	2-3 years
	3-4 years
	4-5 years
	5+ years

8.	**How long has your organization been participating in community engagement?**
	0-1 years
	1-2 years
	2-3 years

	3-4 years
	4-5 years
	5+ years

9.	**How long has your organization been in a partnership and/or engaged with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, currently or in the past?**
	0-1 years
	1-2 years
	2-3 years
	3-4 years
	4-5 years
	5+ years

10.	**How would you describe your individual engagement level with community engagement in general?**
	No engagement
	Minimally engaged
	Average engagement
	Highly engaged

11.	**How would you describe your organization's engagement level with community engagement in general?**
	No engagement
	Minimally engaged
	Average engagement
	Highly engaged

12.	**Is this the only partnership your organization has with a higher education institution?**
	Yes
	No

13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:					
	Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly

	Disagree				Agree
The DDCE provides useful/necessary resources for my organization					
I have a direct contact at DDCE whom I can contact when I need					
Through my partnership, I have a better connection with the University as a whole					
My experience with the division has been beneficial to my organization					
My experience with the University has been beneficial to my organization					
DDCE staff are attuned to my organization's need and purpose					

14. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following:					
	Strongly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied
Interactions with DDCE as a whole					
Communication with a DDCE employee					
Co-creation of programs or initiatives with DDCE					
Input from University professors/researchers/scholars					
Access to resources from the University (such as in-kind support, expert participation, research, student volunteers, etc.)					
Access to resources from					

the University (such as in-kind support, expert participation, research, student volunteers, etc.)					

15.	**How is the majority of your interaction with DDCE staff conducted?**
	Email or phone
	Face to face visits
	At DDCE events or meetings
	Online and/or through social media
	No interaction
	Other: (please specify) _____

16.	**In the past year, on average, how often have you met or contacted a DDCE staff member?**
	Never
	Once
	2-3 times
	4-5 times
	6+ times

17.	**In the past year, on average, how often has a DDCE staff member met or contacted you?**
	Never
	Once
	2-3 times
	4-5 times
	6+ times

18. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe that the University hears my organization's perspective					
I believe that the DDCE hears my					

organization's perspective					
I believe that my organization is an authentic co-creator in initiatives or programs with DDCE					
I believe that my perspective on the University has improved since my organization started a partnership with DDCE					
I believe that my partnerships with the DDCE has been mutually beneficial					
I believe that my organization has a reciprocal relationship with the DDCE					

19. Please indicate your assessment of the following items			
	Poor	Average	Excellent
What level of performance do you think the DDCE overall is reaching?			
If poor or average, what would you like to see them do better? [open ended question]			
What level of performance do you think DDCE staff you are in direct contact with are reaching?			
If poor or average, what would you like to see them do better? [open ended question]			
What level of performance do you think UT Austin overall is reaching?			
If poor or average, what would you like to see them do better? [open ended question]			

20.	**Which units within DDCE is your organization engaged with?** (option to choose more than one)
	Office of the Vice President
	Community and External Relations
	Communications
	Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence
	Longhorn Center for Community Engagement
	Community Engagement Center
	The Project

	Longhorn Center for School Partnerships
	Office for Inclusion and Equity
	UIL
	Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
	Multicultural Engagement Center
	Gender and Sexuality Center
	Longhorn Campaign for Men of Color (AAMRI, Project MALES, MBK)
	UT Elementary School
	UT-Outreach
	UT Charter Schools
	Services for Students with Disabilities
	Other (please specify):

21.	**What are some initiatives/programs you have recently worked on with DDCE?**

22.	**What do you believe are some <u>strengths</u> of your partnership with DDCE?**

23.	**What do you believe are some <u>weaknesses</u> of your partnership with DDCE?**

24.	**What are some ways that DDCE can improve upon its partnership with you and/or your organization specifically?**

25.	**What are some ways that UT Austin can improve upon its community engagement efforts in general?**

26.	**Would you be interested in participating in two interviews, each lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, for the dissertation study on the experiences of community partners at UT Austin?**
	Yes
	No

If yes, please fill out the following information:

27.	**Name:** **Email:** **Phone:** **Organization:**

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the interview section of the dissertation study. I will contact you shortly about setting up our first interview.

If no is selected on 26.
Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.

By clicking submit, you are consenting to having your responses recorded for the use in the above mentioned dissertation study. If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Khalaf at jessicakhalaf@austin.utexas.edu or 512-232-7712. Thank you.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Questions and Connections to Theories

Question	Mutually Reciprocal Partnership Elements	Conceptual Framework Connection
1.-5.	(Demographic information)	-
6.-12.	Sustainability, relationship building, acknowledgement by higher education institution	Relationships, Knowledge, Perspectives
13.	Relationship building, communication, fairness, effectiveness, value of the partnership, goal setting, acknowledgement by the higher education institution, and sustainability of the partnership	Relationships, Perspectives, Values, and Knowledge
14.	Relationship building, communication, fairness, effectiveness, value of the partnership, goal setting, acknowledgement by the higher education institution, and sustainability of the partnership	Relationships, Perspectives, Values, and Knowledge
15.-17.	Communication, sustainability	Relationships
18.	Fairness, effectiveness, value of the partnership, and acknowledgement by the higher education institution	Values, Perspectives, Knowledge
19.	Sustainability of the partnership, effectiveness, relationship building, value of the partnership	Relationships, Perspectives, Values, and Knowledge
20.-25.	Relationship building, communication, fairness, effectiveness, value of the partnership, goal setting, acknowledgement by the higher education institution, and sustainability of the partnership	Relationships, Perspectives, Values, and Knowledge
26.-27.	Interest in interviews for dissertation study	-

APPENDIX D

Interview Email

Dear (Community Partner Name):

Thank you for indicating your interest in being part of a dissertation study on the experiences of community partners at The University of Texas at Austin.

As a doctoral student in the Department of Education Administration as well as an employee in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) I am interested in enhancing the work of community engagement and community-university partnerships at The University of Texas at Austin. While I work at the DDCE it is important to make clear that your participation in this study will in no way negatively affect your current and future engagement with the division. Your confidentiality and anonymity are of upmost important to this research study.

The Carnegie Foundation (n.d.b) defines community engagement as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good."

The purpose of this study is to address the gap in community engagement research on the perspectives and experiences of community partners. As a result, your participation will not only add to the needed understanding about community-university partnerships, but it can also help shape future community engagement at the university and beyond.

Based on your responses on the questionnaire, you meet the following criteria:
a) have a two-year or longer partnership with DDCE
b) identify as the direct point person of contact for that partnership.

As a participant, you will take part in two interviews, each lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. The interviews will be conducted at a time and place of your convenience. Your responses and input will be confidential.

If you are still interested in being part of this research study, please reply to this email. Your participation is voluntary throughout the research process.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need further clarification. My contact information is:
Email: jessicakhalaf@austin.utexas.edu
Phone: 512-232-7712

Thank you and looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Jessica Khalaf

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we get started, I want to give you a copy of the consent form and make sure to answer any questions you may have.

Do you have any questions about the consent form?

As you know, your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to not answer any questions during the interview. I would like to audio record this interview, per you permission. Do I have your verbal consent to record the interview?

I also want share a little about myself and my approach to this research study, including how my perspective has shaped how I hope this research study will be conducted and to what purposes.

Do you have any questions at this time?

<u>Background Information:</u>

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself?
    a. Where are you from?
    b. How long you have been in Austin?
    c. What are some social or cultural identities you would identify as?

2. Could you tell me about your organization/school/entity affiliation?
    a. What type of organization is it?
    b. Who does it serve?
    c. What area(s) in Austin is it located and/or serve?
    d. How you came to be in this position?
    e. How long have you been with them?
    f. What is the mission/vision of the organization?

3. How did you first become involved in community engagement either in your current position or before?

4. What are your thoughts about community engagement through community-university partnerships?

5. Other than the partnership with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, is your organization involved in any other partnerships with colleges or universities? Can you tell me approximately how many institutions?

6. The Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. How do you define mutually beneficial partnerships?

    a. What about reciprocity?
    b. How do you feel about these two elements within community-university partnerships?

Partnership with UT and DDCE:

7. In this current position, how did the partnerships with UT Austin through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement begin?
    a. Who initiated the partnerships?
    b. Was there a formal plan for the partnership?
    c. What were your expectations/goals?
    d. Were they met?
    e. Were there any issues that came about before starting the partnership?

8. What did you know about the university before you began the partnership?
    a. Historical contexts, if any
    b. Current issues at the university

9. What did you know about the division before you began the partnership?

10. The university has not always had a great relationship with its surrounding communities. Did that in any way affect how you or your organization went about engaging with the institution?

11. How long has the partnerships been going for?

12. What does the partnerships entail?
    a. What people, offices, colleges, or other connections from the university have you worked with through this partnership?

13. Can you tell me about one major event/initiative/issue through the partnership that has shaped how you see the partnership?

Issues and Influences on the Partnership:

14. How has being in this community-university partnership affected your organization?

15. How would you describe the relationship between your organization and the university and/or DDCE?

16. How has the partnership evolved since you first became involved in it?

17. Going back to your definition of mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocity, how do you see these two elements playing out in this partnership?
    a. What are ways to enhance these elements?
    b. What are the realistic expectations from such a partnership?

18. Have you ever considered stopping the partnership?
    a. If so, what was the cause?
    b. What made you or your organization continue on with the partnership?
    c. Why was it important to continue this connection?

19. What would you say are some benefits to being in this partnership from both the community side and the university side?

20. What would you say is the level of communication between your organization and the university side?

Reflections on the Partnership:

21. Looking back, would you have done anything differently in how the partnership came about or what its purpose and goal is?

22. What do you believe the university and/or DDCE should do to continue creating community-university partnerships?

23. There are often power imbalances in any relationships, how do you think these have played out in this relationship?

24. If a community organization were to ask you about the benefits and challenges of being in a community-university partnership with UT and DDCE, how would you answer them?
    a. Would you encourage or dissuade them from starting a partnership?

25. What have been some helpful skills or experiences that have assisted you in partnering with the university and/or the division?

26. Since starting the partnership, has your opinion about the university changed at all? If so, how?

Personal Reflections:

27. If you were to change your role in your current organization or start a new position somewhere else, would you continue engaging in a community-university partnership, if applicable? Why or why not?

28. How has being in this community-university partnership affected you personally?

29. What would you like the university to know about your community organization and this partnership that has developed between you both?

30. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience in being part of a community-university partnership with the University of Texas at Austin and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement?

Conclusion of first interview:
Thank you for your participation in this interview. If possible, I would like to set up our next interview at this time. Also, I will be sharing the transcript from this interview with you via email so that you may provide any feedback or clarification to any comments.

Conclusion of second interview:
Thank you again for your participation in this dissertation study. I appreciate the time and effort it took in participating in both interviews. I will also share the transcript from this interview for any follow-up discussions.

APPENDIX F

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: Engaging the Community in Community Engagement: Community Partners, Mutual Benefit, and Reciprocity in Community-University Partnerships

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about community partners' experiences in community engagement. The purpose of this study is to better understand how community partners' perspectives and experiences in community engagement, including how they define mutually beneficial and reciprocal community-university partnerships.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews, each lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. You will also be asked to provide any relevant documentation about your community-university partnership. Finally, you will have the opportunity to participate in any follow-ups through email or phone calls if needed for clarification. This study will take no more than four hours of time for each participant, including the two interview sessions and will include approximately 15 study participants. Your interviews will be audio recorded for research purposes.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, a possible benefit is a better understanding of community-university partnerships from the perspective of different community partners as well as the opportunity to reflect on one's own experience in community engagement. General benefits to society could include an acknowledgement of the effort and complexity that community engagement entails for community members.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate, please return this signed from to the principal investigator (Jessica Khalaf). You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by secured storage of all data sources obtained from the study and by use of pseudonyms on interview transcripts. Your name and organizational affiliation will not be used on any information that is published or shared.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Once the recordings are transcribed, all audio recordings will be destroyed and the transcripts with pseudonyms will be kept by the researcher.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher, Jessica Khalaf, at 512-232-7712 or send an email to jessicakhalaf@austin.utexas.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is **[STUDY NUMBER].**

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate, please return this signed from to the principal investigator, Jessica Khalaf. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time.

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